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Transcript: White House Briefing, April 7

(Economy, Immigration, Leak investigation, India, Terrorist surveillance program, Homeland Security employee allegations, North Korea, Energy, Line-item veto) (9840)

White House press secretary Scott McClellan briefed the press April 7.

Following is the transcript of the White House briefing:

(begin transcript)

THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary
April 7, 2006

PRESS BRIEFING BY SCOTT McCLELLAN

TOPICS

- Economy
- Immigration
- Leak investigation
- India
- Terrorist surveillance program
- Homeland Security employee allegations
- North Korea
- Energy
- Line-item veto

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary
April 7, 2006

PRESS BRIEFING BY SCOTT McCLELLAN

James S. Brady Briefing Room

12:54 P.M. EDT

MR. MCCLELLAN: Good afternoon, everyone. Happy Friday. I want to begin by talking about two important issues. First, the economy, and then immigration and then I'll be glad to go to your questions.

The latest employment report came out this morning; it showed the latest job numbers for the month of March. The employment report shows that our economy is strong and growing, with robust job creation. It's because of the hard work and the ingenuity of the American workers and because of the pro-growth policies that we have put in place that our economy is growing strongly.

Two hundred and eleven thousand new jobs were created in the month of March -- that's above market expectations. The unemployment rate fell to 4.7 percent, well below the averages of the '70s, '80s and '90s. About 5.2 million jobs have been created since August of 2003. Americans own -- more Americans own their home than ever before. Minority home ownership is at record levels. Consumer confidence is the highest it's been in four years -- or nearly four years. Productivity is high. Inflation is contained.

But it's important that we continue to act to keep our economy growing strong. The President talked a little bit earlier this morning about the importance of making the tax cuts that we put in place permanent. He talked about the importance of continuing to move forward on restraining spending. And he talked about tools that are available to us. We want to stay on track to cut the deficit in half by 2009.

And he also talked about the importance of Congress moving forward and acting on the initiatives he outlined in the State of the Union: his initiatives to keep our economy the most competitive in the world; his initiative to address the rising energy prices that we're seeing by moving forward on his advanced energy initiative, to really transform the way we power our homes and our cars.

And, as he talked about earlier this week, the importance of moving to a consumer-driven health care system, where consumers have more control over their health care, and that that will help lower costs, particularly by expanding health savings accounts, moving forward on electronic records for all Americans -- health records -- moving forward on medical liability reform, and associated health plans, among other things.

Secondly, I just want to talk about immigration reform. This is an issue that is being debated in the Senate this week. Yesterday we were encouraged to see that Republicans and Democrats in the Senate came together to reach a compromise. The President talked about how he appreciated the fact that

many members in the Senate recognize the importance of moving forward on comprehensive immigration reform. This is a difficult and complex issue. It's important for voices to be heard as the debate moves forward.

Unfortunately, the Senate Minority Leader prevented voices from being heard and amendments from being considered. He is preventing comprehensive immigration reform from moving forward. We call on the Senate Minority Leader to stop blocking this process from moving forward so that we can get comprehensive immigration reform passed.

And with that, I will be glad to go to your questions. Deb, go ahead.

Q: Back when the NIE was released on July 18, 2003, you were asked that day when that had been actually declassified. And you said in that gaggle that it had been declassified that day. And if that's the case, then when the information was passed on to the reporter 10 days earlier, then it was still classified at that time.

MR. McCLELLAN: Well, I think you're referring -- a couple of things. First of all, it was publicly released that day, so that's when a portion of the National Intelligence Estimate that we were making available to the public was released. The second part of your question is referring to an ongoing legal proceeding, and referring to a filing in that legal proceeding. We have had a policy in place, going back to the October time period of 2003, that we are not going to comment on an ongoing investigation or an ongoing legal proceeding. That policy remains unchanged.

But let me point out a couple of facts, step back from this legal proceeding. The President of the United States has the authority to declassify information. I also indicated to some reporters earlier today that the President would never authorize the disclosure of information that he felt could compromise our nation's security. Now, the National Intelligence Estimate was declassified -- portions of it were declassified. We made sure that we did not -- that we continued to protect sensitive sources and methods within the National Intelligence Estimate.

But let's go back to the time period that you're talking about, because I think it's important for the public to know or recall that time period.

There was a lot of debate going on about the pre-war intelligence that was used in the lead up to the decision to go into Iraq and remove a brutal tyrant from his position of power. There were irresponsible and unfounded accusations being made against the administration, suggesting that we had manipulated or misused that intelligence. That was flat-out false. The National Intelligence Estimate was a document that was provided to members of Congress. It is the collective judgment of the intelligence community. And because of the public debate that was going on and some of the wild accusations that were flying around at the time, we felt it was very much in the public interest that what information could be declassified, be declassified. And that's exactly what we did.

Q: I understand the reason why you thought it needed to be declassified, because of the debate at the time. The question was, when was it declassified. And you were asked that day, when -- the question was, "When was it actually declassified?" And you said, "It was officially declassified today."

If it had been officially declassified on July 18, 2003, then 10 days before, when the information was given out, it was still classified at the time.

MR. McCLELLAN: Again, you're going back to an assertion that is made in a filing related to an ongoing legal proceeding when you talk about the second part of your question. There is no way for me to separate that question and talk about this issue without discussing an ongoing legal proceeding. And I can't do that. We have a policy that's been established, and I'm obligated to adhere to that policy.

Q: But answer the question, it's a factual question.

MR. McCLELLAN: Yes, but you can't separate that question from the legal proceeding --

Q: Was it declassified that day --

MR. McCLELLAN: -- because of one of the assertions that was made in the filing.

Well, you can go back and look at comments that were made at that time. That was when it was --

Q: Those were your comments.

MR. McCLELLAN: -- that was when it was publicly released at the time. I haven't looked back at exactly what was said at that time.

Q: Well, let's be really clear about this. It says right here on July 18th, "When was it actually declassified?" Mr. McClellan, answer, "It was officially declassified today." Is that correct?

MR. McCLELLAN: Again, you're asking me to get into the timing. I'm not backing away from anything that was said previously -- that's when the document was released, so that's when it officially --

Q: They don't say "released." They say "declassify."

MR. McCLELLAN: I know, Jim. Let me tell you. That's when it was officially released. So I think that's what I was referring to at the time. I'd have to go back and look at the specific comments, but I'm not changing anything that was said previously, so let me make that clear.

Q: But if you were --

MR. McCLELLAN: Now, secondly, the question you're going to, again, relates to the timing of when certain information was declassified --

Q: I'm not going to that question --

MR. McCLELLAN: Well, but there's no way you can separate that question out from the ongoing legal proceeding --

Q: Scott, you are very careful with your words here. I think if you wanted to say "released," you would have said "released." You said, "declassified."

MR. McCLELLAN: Okay.

Q: Well, what does that tell --

MR. McCLELLAN: That's when the information was released publicly.

Q: Scott, did you not know --

MR. McCLELLAN: But there was --

Q: That's not what --

MR. McCLELLAN: Now, for the National Intelligence Estimate, Jim, it did go through a declassification process; you are correct. And the information was carefully looked at by the intelligence community before the portions of the National Intelligence Estimate were made available to the public --

Q: But, Scott, you said, "declassified." If it's declassified on that day, it wasn't declassified before. And you're saying you're sticking to -- you're not taking back anything you said before, and what you said that day is it was officially declassified.

MR. McCLELLAN: I'd be glad to take a look at exactly what I said, and I'll do that.

Q: You didn't say -- I mean, we've got that here --

MR. McCLELLAN: I can't do that here in this room right now, but I'll be glad to take a look at it --

Q: Then why are you saying you're not backing up from anything if you --

MR. McCLELLAN: Well, what I'm saying is that -- I think what I was referring to is the fact that that was when it was made available to the public. So all that information is officially declassified at that point.

Q: Then why are you saying you won't back off anything you said before if, in fact, we have transcripts here where you say that's when it was officially declassified? Are you still saying that's when it was officially declassified?

MR. McCLELLAN: That's when it was made available to the public. So it's officially --

Q: When was it officially declassified?

MR. McCLELLAN: -- so it's officially declassified at that point. I think we're talking past each other a little bit. I'll have to go back and look at the specific transcript -- and I'll be glad to do that -- and we can talk about it further later.

Q: Okay. When was it officially declassified?

MR. McCLELLAN: Again, in terms of the timing of when information may have been declassified, that gets into a question relating to the legal proceeding in a filing that was made by Mr. Fitzgerald earlier this week.

Q: What were you referring to on July 18th, then? Was that the official release, or official declassification?

MR. McCLELLAN: Well, that's what I'll have to check. I'll have to go back and look. But my sense is, and my recollection is -- while we're sitting here talking about it is -- I was referring to the fact that was when it was officially declassified for the public.

Q: Scott --

Q: Can I just -- one more here. In terms of releasing information and leaks, you know the President has been highly critical of people who leak --

MR. McCLELLAN: Absolutely.

Q: -- not just classified material. He has said in the fall of 2003, "I've constantly expressed my displeasure with leaks." Now, whether the argument from the administration is he declassified this, so it wasn't classified information -- I know you're not going to get to the legal issues here -- but he has criticized people who leak, not just classified information. And there were clearly leaks coming out of this White House --

MR. McCLELLAN: What was the context of my comments -- about leaking of classified information, I believe.

Q: He was asked about leaking classified information, but the President said, "I've constantly expressed my displeasure with leaks." Not just classified information. He says "particularly leaks."

MR. McCLELLAN: The President believes the leaking of classified information is a very serious matter. And I think that's why it's important to draw a distinction here. Declassifying information and providing it to the public, when it is in the public interest, is one thing. But leaking classified information that could compromise our national security is something that is very serious. And there is a distinction.

Now, there are Democrats out there that fail to recognize that distinction, or refuse to recognize that distinction. They are simply engaging in crass politics. Let's make clear what the distinction is.

Q: He said, "displeasure with leaks," not just classified leaks, though, Scott.

Q: Scott, can I follow on that for a second. Because in December of 2003, to follow on this, he says, "If there's a leak out of the administration, I want to know who it is." Now, is there a question -- we're not talking about legality here -- while he's saying that, according to the court filing -- which I know you can't get into the specifics of -- but as he's saying it, he certainly is aware who would have allowed the information to be disseminated. So, at best, isn't the statement "If there's a leak out of the administration, I want to know who it is" -- at best, isn't that just inconsistent, if not misleading?

MR. McCLELLAN: Absolutely not. That's referring to the leaking of classified information.

Q: Only the leaking of classified information. He doesn't --

MR. McCLELLAN: I think that in the context of what that question was responding to --

Q: So what about if it's a political? And if it's in political -- if there's a political purpose to it, then it's fine?

MR. McCLELLAN: If it's in the public interest, it's another matter. And the National Intelligence Estimate was declassified because it was in the public interest to provide portions of that National Intelligence Estimate to the American people. As I said, there were people that were out there making irresponsible accusations that intelligence was manipulated or that intelligence was misused. There has been no evidence to back that up whatsoever. And if you look at the National Intelligence Estimate, Jim -- you weren't here at the time, but some others in this room were -- it shows the collective judgment of the intelligence community.

And then you go back and look at the bipartisan Robb-Silberman commission, and they said there is no evidence of political pressure on the intelligence analysts. You go back and look at the Butler report. The Butler report said that there was no evidence of deliberate distortion. You go back and look at the Senate Intelligence Committee report, they say they did not find any evidence that administration officials attempted to coerce, influence or pressure analysts to change their judgments.

So this was part of the debate that was going on at that time in the public. And so it was in the public interest that information be declassified.

Q: I understand that. My only question is --

MR. McCLELLAN: And this information, too -- and another distinction. This was pre-war intelligence we're talking about. So it was historical context that was being provided, not information that could compromise our nation's security.

Q: My only question is looking ahead, when he then says, "I want to know who the leaker" was -- doesn't he know, since he authorized the disclosure of the information?

MR. McCLELLAN: Actually, go back and look at the filing that was made by Mr. Fitzgerald, because Mr. Fitzgerald talks about that very issue in his filing and contradicts what you're suggesting.

Q: I'm not suggesting -- this has nothing to do with Valerie Plame, nothing to do with it.

MR. McCLELLAN: I think that's what the question was about.

Q: My question is, though, at the same time -- at the same time he's -- even if there's nothing to do with Plame, there is some disclosure about NIE information.

MR. McCLELLAN: Let's draw the distinction here, again. There is an important distinction that people need to make when they are looking back at this issue. I just laid out what that distinction is. You're talking about information that was declassified and provided to the American people because it was in the public interest that they have that information so they could see what the facts were. And the facts were that this was the collective judgment of the intelligence community.

Now, the intelligence was wrong, and that's why we put in place a bipartisan commission, independent commission to go and look at the intelligence, and they made recommendations about how we could improve our intelligence-gathering. And we have implemented many reforms to make sure we get the best possible intelligence.

Q: Scott, I've got a couple of things here. First, did you have any personal knowledge on July 18th -- when you answered the question that started off this round of questions -- did you have any personal knowledge of discussions between the President and the Vice President about declassifying portions of the NIE?

MR. McCLELLAN: That's a question that gets into talking about an ongoing legal proceeding, and I just can't do that because the policy of this White House is that we are not going to comment on it while it's ongoing. So I'm adhering to that policy, and I would hope that you could appreciate that.

Q: You've at times at this podium told us that you had had assurances from people and that's caused you a lot of trouble, from this podium. Are you saying that that statement was true at the time that you knew it?

MR. McCLELLAN: Again, in terms of -- which statement are you referring to?

Q: That on July 18th it was officially declassified.

MR. McCLELLAN: Well, again, that question was asked at the beginning and I think what I was referring to is this is when it's now being made available to the public, so it's officially declassified at that point.

Q: That's not what you said, though, we know that --

MR. McCLELLAN: I'll have to take a look at it. No, I think that's what I was referring to.

Q: There is a distinction, though --

MR. McCLELLAN: Deb, hold on. I'll be glad to take a look at it, and we can talk about it. I'm around all day.

Q: We're trying to give you an opportunity here, and --

MR. McCLELLAN: I haven't gone back and looked at every single word that was said at the time. But, again, based on what Deb just said, my recollection is that I was referring to the fact that, yes, it's officially declassified today.

Q: All right, let's talk about the politics of this.

MR. McCLELLAN: But that doesn't get into the issue of when everything was declassified.

Q: The purpose of releasing portions of this clearly had a political implication for the administration. There is a debate going on, and you wanted to counter that debate. And, yet, you're criticizing Democrats, saying that they are engaging in crass politics for saying that they're -- that this was leaking. How do you not see that there was a --

MR. McCLELLAN: For the reasons I stated. That's a very good question. Let's talk about the distinction. There is a difference between leaking classified information that could compromise sources and methods, which could be harmful to our nation's security. The terrorist surveillance program is a prime example. There was an unauthorized disclosure of this vital program that is helping to prevent attacks and save American lives. This is a program that is aimed at intercepting international communications involving known al Qaeda members or suspected al Qaeda affiliates. And it is vital to our nation's interest.

General Hayden, the number-two man in our intelligence community, said its disclosure is harmful to our nation's security. So there is a clear distinction here. Democrats refuse to recognize that distinction. That is engaging in crass politics.

On the issue of the National Intelligence Estimate, that is something that was in the public interest that it be disclosed because there is a lot of debate going on. And we will vigorously set the record straight when people are putting out misinformation or trying to suggest things that simply are not true.

Helen, go ahead.

Q: Did the President know that Joe Wilson was married to a CIA agent before Novak revealed it?

MR. McCLELLAN: Again, this goes to -- go back and look at previous comments, but this goes to an ongoing legal proceeding, and I would encourage you --

Q: Did he know? It's a simple question.

MR. McCLELLAN: -- I would encourage you to go and look at the filing that was made just the other night, because Mr. Fitzgerald touches on that subject in the filing.

Q: You mean the President did not know?

MR. McCLELLAN: Helen, I can't get into discussing an ongoing legal proceeding, and that's a question relating to the ongoing legal proceeding.

Q: I think it's a very simple, important question.

MR. McCLELLAN: Matt, did you have something?

Q: Yes, your refusal to comment on this on the grounds of it being an ongoing legal proceeding --

MR. McCLELLAN: Let me -- let me -- hang on, hang on --

Q: -- that leads to the conclusion that --

MR. McCLELLAN: Hang on.

Q: All right.

MR. McCLELLAN: Hang on. Let me just say why and remind people why. There is an ongoing legal proceeding underway that is headed toward trial. We want to see a fair trial. We want to see due process. We don't want to do anything that could compromise this ongoing legal proceeding or compromise or jeopardize the trial. And that has been our policy with other matters, as well. And so this has been a policy that has been well established for a long time.

Now, to your question.

Q: This inevitably leads to the conclusion that you are not disputing the allegation that the President was involved in the leaking -- or authorized the leaking of classified information. Are you satisfied with that? And is that really in the interests of the American people?

MR. McCLELLAN: I'm not getting into confirming or denying things, because I'm not commenting at all on matters relating to an ongoing legal proceeding.

Q: Scott, just a --

MR. McCLELLAN: Let me come back to you. Elaine, go ahead.

Q: Scott, let me ask you about the issue of credibility. Isn't the fact that you're up here having to vigorously defend and make the distinction between what some people see as leaking and what you are saying, from what I understand, is the sharing of information to provide historical context -- isn't that illustrative of the fact that the President's credibility has been damaged by it?

MR. McCLELLAN: The Democrats have a credibility problem when they try to suggest that we were manipulating intelligence, or that this is about something other than what I just said. That's crass politics. And they're the ones who have an issue when it comes to what you bring up.

Go ahead.

Q: I want to see if I can sort out what you described earlier as sort of "talking past" each other earlier. There's a process for declassification, and the President has declassification authority.

MR. McCLELLAN: That's correct.

Q: When the President determines that classified information can be made public without jeopardizing sources and methods, that it's an appropriate thing to do, is that -- can that supplant the declassification process? Is that, in effect, an immediate act? Is it de facto declassified by that determination --

MR. McCLELLAN: The President can declassify information if he chooses.

Q: So if a declassification --

MR. McCLELLAN: It's inherent in our Constitution. He is the head of the executive branch.

Q: Is it possible, then, for a declassification process to be underway, or perhaps not yet even started, but perhaps in the middle of it, the President can say, this is declassified and -- or this is something that is worthy of the American people seeing, and they can happen on separate tracks?

MR. McCLELLAN: I want to be careful here, because that is touching on something that is brought up in the legal proceedings. So --

Q: Well, it's a question more about administrative policy and how the White House would handle it.

MR. McCLELLAN: -- but the President is authorized to declassify information as he chooses.

Q: Right, so just one other question, if I can. You've already taken a couple of shots at Democrats, but the Minority Leader this morning has gone to the Senate floor and demanded a whole series of questions to be answered. At one point, he says that only the President can answer the question as to whether or not the buck stops in the Oval Office or the leaks start, and has suggested that what he is now seeing -- Harry Reid, the Minority Leader -- in his opinion, it speaks to a pattern of misleading America by the Bush White House. It raises somber and troubling questions about the Bush administration's candor with Congress and the American people.

This does seem to be yet another example of the Democrat's ability to criticize the President for not coming clean on all of this. How would --

MR. McCLELLAN: That is exactly --

Q: Hold on.

MR. McCLELLAN: Okay, go ahead.

Q: How would you explain to the nation the President's assertion that anybody who leaks information would be prosecuted, when they are now -- the Democrats now see that the President --

MR. McCLELLAN: Leaking classified information.

Q: Right.

MR. McCLELLAN: There's a distinction here. That is the kind of crass politics that I am referring to. Democrat leaders, like the one you brought up, are refusing to acknowledge an important distinction here. First of all, the national intelligence information was declassified information that was provided to the American people.

Now the other issue I brought up was the issue of the terrorist surveillance program. You bet the President has spoken out about its unauthorized disclosure, because what its disclosure has done is shown al Qaeda, our enemy, the play book. This is an enemy that watches us very closely. This is an enemy that adapts and adjusts when they learn information about our tactics. And it's important -- it's important, as we carry out this war on terrorism, that we don't do anything that could compromise our nation's security.

The terrorist surveillance program has been a vital tool that has helped to save American lives. And it's one tool, in an overall arsenal of tools, that we are using to take the fight to the enemy and stop attacks from happening on American soil.

Q: But I just want to make sure I understand. In effect, your answer to the Harry Reid criticism is that the President has the authority to declassify. Therefore, the discussion of leak is inappropriate.

MR. McCLELLAN: My response to what he said is that that's just crass politics, because he is not acknowledging an important distinction. And the distinction is that, one, the information that he was referring to was declassified. And the other information he's trying to twist and put into that is a separate matter. These are two separate issues.

Go ahead.

Q: Two questions. One, as far as U.S.-India --

MR. McCLELLAN: Let me stay on this topic, and I'll come back. Go ahead.

Q: You all talk about the court filing -- you've said that. But you seem to want to convey the idea that if what happened in the court filing happened, then it's okay, because it wasn't classified at the time --

MR. McCLELLAN: I'm not conveying any ideas about the court filing. What I'm talking about is the facts, at the time, and trying to put in context for people in this room and people that are listening, the time period and what was going on during that time period. But the National Intelligence Estimate was declassified in part because there was a lot of debate going on, and there was a lot of misinformation out there. It was important for the American people to have that information.

Q: You seem to be trying to come up with a definition of the word "leak", which is that if it's not classified, and it's not endangering national security by revealing it, then therefore it's not a leak. Is that a --

MR. McCLELLAN: No, that's not what I'm saying. What I'm saying is that there is a difference between providing declassified information to the public when it's in the public interest, and leaking classified information that involves sensitive national intelligence regarding our security.

Go ahead, Martha.

Q: Can I just go back to this original statement that the President said about, "I constantly express my displeasure with leaks, particularly leaks of classified information" -- leaving the impression he doesn't like any leaks. Can you give us an idea how the President feels about leaking information, since if this information --

MR. McCLELLAN: Well, I think we have to draw distinctions here, and what specifically you're referring to. I mean, if people are going out there talking about a potential policy decision-making process that is still in development and that the President hasn't come to a decision on, then that's not helpful information, and of course we'd look down on something like that.

Q: But otherwise, if it's helpful to you and it's declassified, leaks are okay?

MR. McCLELLAN: No, if it's in the public interest.

Q: Leaks are okay?

MR. McCLELLAN: No, I didn't say that. What I'm saying is that the issue here is the National Intelligence Estimate --

Q: No, I'm not talking about that. I'm talking about leaks.

MR. McCLELLAN: -- and the declassifying of the National Intelligence Estimate.

Q: I'm talking about a statement the President made in the fall of 2003.

MR. McCLELLAN: I'm not going to try to draw a broad conclusion, or make a broad statement. If you've got specific instances you want to refer to --

Q: No, you seem to be saying it's bad to leak classified information that will hurt the country --

MR. McCLELLAN: Let me give you a specific instance --

Q: -- but it's not bad to leak declassified.

MR. McCLELLAN: A specific instance is the leaking of classified information that could harm sources and methods, or put them at risk, or harm our nation's security. One is the terrorist surveillance program.

Q: Understood, but that's not the issue here.

MR. McCLELLAN: Sure it is part of the issue, because that's --

Q: It's part of the issue, but not the part of the issue I'm trying to get to.

MR. McCLELLAN: -- that's exactly what the President is referring to when he's talking about leaking of classified information. That's exactly the kind of information he's talking about.

Q: I know he is, but what I'm saying is the President expressed displeasure about leaks, not just classified leaks, but displeasure --

MR. McCLELLAN: Sure, he's talked about that in the past.

Q: So he has displeasure about leaks, even of declassified material?

MR. McCLELLAN: Well, again, you have to look at what specific instance are you talking about.

Q: Well, you won't talk about the specific instance we want to talk about --

MR. McCLELLAN: No, I just gave you an example.

Q: -- so, in general --

MR. McCLELLAN: I just gave you an example.

Q: -- if you leak something, he has no problems as long as it's not classified?

MR. McCLELLAN: That's not what I said, Martha. What I said is what I said, and you ought to listen to what I said, not try to put words in my mouth.

Q: No, I'm not.

MR. McCLELLAN: And I think you can go back -- if you've got a specific instance of a leak, bring it up.

Q: Did he have a specific instance when he said his displeasure about leaks?

MR. McCLELLAN: Yes, he was being asked about classified information being disclosed.

Q: "I constantly express my displeasure with leaks, particularly classified leaks."

MR. McCLELLAN: That was in the context of people leaking classified information. But, sure, this is a town -- I mean, this is a town where that happens a lot. And a lot of those are not helpful things to have happen. But you're asking me to make a broad statement, and I'm not going to do that.

Q: Scott, what was the President's reaction to this story?

MR. McCLELLAN: I'm sorry?

Q: What was the President's reaction to this story? What has he said?

MR. McCLELLAN: "This story"?

Q: The story, as it's published.

MR. McCLELLAN: "The story as it's published"? Which story as it's published?

Q: You sound like Donald Rumsfeld. (Laughter.)

MR. McCLELLAN: "This story" -- I'm just asking you to specify what the story is.

Q: I'm talking about the filing --

MR. McCLELLAN: The filing by Mr. Fitzgerald, okay.

Q: -- I'm talking about what we found out --

MR. McCLELLAN: The filing by Mr. Fitzgerald. I can't get into talking with you relating to an ongoing legal proceeding.

Q: I'm not asking you to. I'm asking, did the President say anything about it?

MR. McCLELLAN: Again, I can't get into talking about an ongoing legal proceeding. That relates to an ongoing legal proceeding. I just can't do that.

Q: Slightly different topic, but you, yourself, said they're linked, when the Attorney General said yesterday that the President might have authority to do wireless wiretapping --

MR. McCLELLAN: Let me come back to it. I'll come back to it.

Q: Thank you.

MR. McCLELLAN: Anyone else on this subject? Kelly.

Q: Is there a bit of an appearance problem for this White House when the President speaks so strongly against leaking? When the Counsel's Office orders ethics classes? And then today you're talking about effectively good leaks and bad leaks, that --

MR. McCLELLAN: Well, you're trying to lump a lot of things in there, and I don't think I would do that, in terms of ethics classes. I mean, those are ongoing throughout the time period we're here in this administration. So let's not lump things together.

Q: But there were some that were ordered specifically --

MR. McCLELLAN: Well, let's not lump those things together.

Q: There were some that were ordered specifically --

MR. McCLELLAN: You're lumping things.

Q: I'm lumping only because the timing of the last public lumping was --

Q: Lumper. (Laughter.)

Q: -- in the fallout of (inaudible), as you may remember, that was made public. So the President is very vocal about leaking at a time when now it appears that he sees some value in releasing some --

MR. McCLELLAN: We are a nation at war. And the leaking of classified information, particularly during a time of war, is much more harmful and much more dangerous. You bet the President is going to continue to speak out about leaking classified information. It is wrong and it can have serious consequences. And what he has said about the leaking of classified information stands. He is very firm in his belief that leaking classified information, particularly information that could be harmful to our nation's security, is a serious matter and it is dangerous, and when people do it they put our nation at risk, they put lives at risk, they put sources and methods at risk.

This is a different kind of war that we are engaged in, against a deadly and dangerous enemy, an enemy that is lethal, an enemy that is sophisticated. And that is what the President often refers to when he talks about the leaking of classified information, and how serious that is.

I'll come back to you. Go ahead, Les. Are we on a different subject? Goyal is first.

Q: Related.

MR. McCLELLAN: Related?

Q: Yes.

MR. McCLELLAN: Okay.

Q: Kind of getting back to where we started. Is information declassified when the President says it is, or when the process is done --

MR. McCLELLAN: He can authorize the declassification of information.

Q: And at that moment does it become declassified, or --

MR. McCLELLAN: He's authorized declassification. He has that authority to do that.

Q: At that moment. He says, today, I want this declassified -- at that moment it's declassified?

MR. McCLELLAN: I'm not saying that he has or hasn't -- if there's any specific example -- but he has that authority, yes.

Q: Immediately, immediate effect?

MR. McCLELLAN: Yes. He has that authority, yes.

Q: Scott, one related.

MR. McCLELLAN: One related. You all on the front row have had multiple questions.

Q: I've got one related.

Q: I've got one --

MR. McCLELLAN: See, you're encouraging others to do this.

Q: There's lumps up there. (Laughter.)

MR. McCLELLAN: I'm glad to stay here all day. This is an important subject, and I'm glad to make the distinctions.

Q: I want to make sure we've got our terms right, that's all. It seems to me, from what I'm hearing, in terms of the way you're explaining this, classified information is leaked; declassified information is provided.

MR. McCLELLAN: Well, declosing [sic] declassified information, like we did with the National Intelligence information, that was provided to you all. That was provided to the public through you all, through your colleagues.

Q: Okay, but when Judy Miller gets it, it's being provided? Or is it being leaked, because then it's declassified?

MR. McCLELLAN: Now, see, that's something that I cannot and you cannot separate from an ongoing legal proceeding. So I can't get into responding to that specific question, because how can you separate it from the legal proceeding and the filing that Mr. Fitzgerald made. I just can't do that.

Q: One more, because you --

MR. McCLELLAN: See what you encouraged?

Q: Well, because this has been invited by your discussion of need to educate the American public in the throes of what you say was a lot of unfair information --

MR. McCLELLAN: To provide facts.

Q: To provide facts.

MR. McCLELLAN: And Congress had those facts.

Q: There have been --

MR. McCLELLAN: Way back when they made the decision to authorize the President's use of force if necessary.

Q: What do you say to critics who argue that the President's decision to disclose this information, to effectively declassify it, in the context of that debate, to provide facts was, in fact -- or at least in their argument -- a political use of intelligence information?

MR. McCLELLAN: It was in the public interest that this information be provided, because there is a debate going on in the public about the use of intelligence leading up to the decision to go into Iraq. This is regarding pre-war intelligence. And there was a lot of misinformation being put out. There were accusations being leveled against the President and against this White House and this administration that intelligence was misused or manipulated.

The fact of the matter is that the intelligence was based on what is laid out in the National Intelligence Estimate, which is the collective judgment of our intelligence community. The fact is that people have looked into how the intelligence was used, and they have seen, as I pointed out, no evidence of such manipulation or misuse.

Q: Scott, two questions. One, as far as U.S.-India nuclear agreement, civil nuclear agreement is concerned, President is also (inaudible) India, and now Dr. Rice, because she vigorously defended the deal on Capitol Hill in the House and Senate. My question is that how serious President is lobbying the U.S. Congress because (inaudible) Prime Minister of India doing same thing in the Indian parliament. So how serious is the President --

MR. McCLELLAN: Well, I think you're seeing today that there is good bipartisan support to begin the process of ratifying this agreement. And this is an important agreement. It goes to our strategic relationship. It goes to our energy security, and India's energy security. And it also, for the first time, will bring India's civilian nuclear program under international safeguards. And that's an important development.

As the President has pointed out previously, India is not a country that was engaged in proliferation. They had a good nonproliferation record. And we had to look at the reality of the situation.

But you've had Senator Biden and, I think, Senator Obama and others that have expressed a willingness to support this agreement, because they recognize the importance of moving forward on it to both our energy and national security interests.

And so I know that Undersecretary Burns has been working very closely with members of Congress, as has Secretary Rice. And the President has discussed it with members that he's had here to the White House. It's an important agreement. And we look forward to continuing to work with Congress and hearing any issues that they might want to bring up and talking to them about the importance of this agreement, answering their questions.

Q: (Inaudible) former General of the Indian television, (inaudible) -- who interviewed the President before the visit and also -- somehow he tried to meet the President in India while President was there, but after his meeting with the President, he was fired from his job. Do you have any idea of what happened, whether it was --

MR. McCLELLAN: First time I've heard about it. (Laughter.) I'll have to take a look.

Connie, go ahead. Wait, wait. Victoria, you had another question.

Q: Yes. The Attorney General, yesterday, when he was testifying, would not rule out the possibility that there is a domestic warrant-less wiretapping program going on. And even the statement that was later issued by the Justice Department wouldn't really confirm or deny one way or the other. Could you give us some idea about --

MR. McCLELLAN: Well, I think what the Justice Department said that no one should read anything into the Attorney General's testimony yesterday, that his comments and quotes shouldn't be interpreted to suggest the existence or nonexistence of a domestic program or whether any such program would be lawful under the existing legal analysis.

What the Attorney General was talking about was the terrorist surveillance program. And this is a very limited program that is focused on intercepting international communications involving al Qaeda or affiliated terrorists.

And so that's the focus, and it's narrowly tailored. It was something that was carefully looked at by those at the NSA as they move forward on putting it in place. And they've made sure that there are important safeguards in place. They made sure that it's something that's reviewed on a regular basis. But it is a vital tool in our efforts to prevent attacks and to prevail in the broader war on terrorism.

Q: Is there a domestic version of the terrorist surveillance program?

MR. McCLELLAN: Again, the Attorney General talked about this yesterday, and I'm not going to go beyond what he said yesterday in terms of the legal issues there.

Go ahead.

Q: Returning to your earlier statements about immigration -- does anybody remember those? I do. What happens in the next two weeks now while the Congress is on recess? Does the White House have meetings? Do you have any attempts to reach a compromise --

MR. McCLELLAN: Well, we've stayed in touch with the leaders. There is a compromise that has already been reached. Many Senate Democrats and Senate Republicans came together and said, let's move forward on this comprehensive piece of legislation and get it to conference committee, and then work with the House to get something done. It's an important priority. It's a priority that many share. And many in Congress recognize the importance of addressing this in a comprehensive way.

We have a broken immigration system. We need to do -- continue to do more to secure our borders, which we are. We've taken a number of steps, but we need to do more. And part of securing our borders is also moving forward on a temporary guest worker program, because that will relieve pressure off the border and allow the border patrol and law enforcement authorities to focus on those who are criminals -- terrorists, drug dealers, drug traffickers, smugglers, human traffickers -- as they should be focusing their efforts.

Q: Two more on this. Since this compromise is in trouble, will the White House offer new language? And, also, what are your feelings, your sentiments about these massive demonstrations?

MR. McCLELLAN: Well, I mean, this legislation is being blocked by the Minority Leader by not allowing the voices to be heard in the debate, and a reasonable number of amendments to be considered on the floor of the Senate. There was a bipartisan agreement that was reached. We appreciate the efforts of Senator Frist, of Senator Hagel, of Senator Martinez and others who came together -- Senator McCain, Senator Kennedy, others, recognized the importance of finding a good compromise to move this process forward.

The reason it is not moving forward right now, before they recess, is because the Minority Leader blocked -- using blocking tactics, and blocked those efforts. And we hope that leaders will be able to come together and move forward on a compromise bill after they get back from the recess. There is a willingness to do so. I know that they are continuing to work it. I think Senator Frist has indicated his intention to continue to work it, to get it moving and get it into conference committee. That's what we want to see.

Q: Follow on that, Scott?

MR. McCLELLAN: Les, go ahead.

Q: I have a two-part. Chairman Peter King of the House Homeland Security Committee has scheduled a May 18th hearing to examine whether the Department of Homeland Security guidelines on screening employees and issuing security clearances are adequate. And my first part, does the President support this examination, which was brought on by former Time Magazine editor and U.S. Department of Homeland Security press officer Brian Doyle's arrest on seven counts of using a computer to try to seduce a child?

MR. McCLELLAN: Well, let me first address the issue you brought up, the arrest. There are very serious allegations that have been made against this individual. The allegations, in our view, are repulsive and disgusting. And if they are true, we cannot express enough outrage at what occurred. That is a matter that is now being handled through the legal process.

Q: Scott, you're commenting on an ongoing legal proceeding. (Laughter.)

Q: Scott, a follow up --

MR. McCLELLAN: No, I'm not. I'm not getting into specifics about it. It's despicable act that is alleged.

Q: Yes. This morning's Washington Post reports that three people reported --

MR. McCLELLAN: Wait, wait, Les, you didn't let me finish the question, someone jumped in here.

Q: Oh, sure, I'm sorry.

MR. McCLELLAN: In terms of Congressman King, they have an oversight role to play when it comes to homeland security. And I think that he's simply exercising that oversight role. And I'm sure that Homeland Security will be glad to cooperate, as they are with the investigation that is proceeding.

Q: This morning's Washington Post reports that three people reported that between 1999 and 2001, that Doyle was caught viewing pornography on Time Magazine's computers, for which he faced discipline. But Time bureau colleagues circulated a letter in his defense. And what is the President's reaction to this and to the Time bureau chief's refusal to reply to calls from The Post asking for some comment?

MR. McCLELLAN: I'm sorry, Les, I didn't hear -- you were going on for so long, and I was finishing on my question. I missed exactly what you were saying. I don't know if I can get into responding to something that I haven't seen.

Q: Well, what was his reaction -- what is the President's reaction --

MR. McCLELLAN: Reaction to?

Q: Reaction to the fact that this -- Time Magazine's computers for which he faced discipline, but Time bureau colleagues circulated a letter in his defense?

MR. McCLELLAN: I don't know the facts here, Les, about what you're referring to. I'd have to look into it.

Now, Matt --

Q: It was in The Post -- you read that paper.

MR. McCLELLAN: Now, Matt brought something up. In terms of the legal proceeding that we're talking about, at the beginning of this, that involves potential administration officials and a former administration official. There's a big difference here in what we're talking about.

Go ahead.

Q: Thank you, Scott. On immigration, I want to ask a specific question about that compromise. In it, it would require, among other things, that illegal immigrants in this country under two years would be forced to leave the country, get in line, and apply for reentry. Does the President really believe that's a workable plan? How could it be enforced?

MR. McCLELLAN: What we're focused on is moving forward on comprehensive legislation. We want to see the Senate act on comprehensive legislation that includes more resources to better secure our borders, that strengthens interior enforcement, and that includes a temporary guest worker program. And then that would go to conference committee. The House has already passed some legislation. And we look forward to an opportunity to work out the details, and iron out those details in the conference committee. The President has outlined some very clear principles.

And so what we're supporting is compromise efforts that build as broad a support as possible to move that process forward. And then we can work with the House leaders and the Senate leaders in conference committee to get a good piece of legislation that everybody can move forward on and pass.

Q: I understand the process that has to play out, but does the President look at that, or did the White House look at that and see that it's truly a --

MR. McCLELLAN: What we're supportive of is moving the process forward on compromise legislation that is based on comprehensive legislation. We're not getting into discussing all the various details within that legislation or embracing all the details within specific legislation. But we are supporting the efforts of leaders to build broad support, as broad a support as possible, and move forward on a compromised piece of legislation that is comprehensive in nature.

Go ahead.

Q: Thank you, Scott. On human rights issues, it is reported the Chinese government has deported North Korean defectors by force to North Korea. It's Korea violation of human rights. What --

MR. McCLELLAN: I'm sorry, that who had deported? I'm sorry.

Q: Chinese government deported --

MR. McCLELLAN: Well, we put out -- I think you're talking about a specific individual?

Q: Yes.

MR. McCLELLAN: We put out a statement on that last week expressing our deep concern about that individual and her well-being. And I don't know if I have anything to add to what we said last week at this point, in terms of updates. But that is a very serious matter to us. And it is a deep concern, if that's what you're referring to.

Roger, go ahead.

Q: On gasoline prices, they are, as you know, rising, and they're rising quite a bit. Wall Street forecasters are now saying that they are going to rise to at or near record, even without Katrina. Does the President think that rising gasoline prices are going to hurt Republicans in the midterms?

MR. McCLELLAN: The President, like many Americans, is concerned about rising energy prices, including the price at the pump. That does have an effect on our economy, a harmful effect on our economy, which is growing very strong. It creates a headwind for our economy, because working families and small businesses that are trying to make ends meet are having to pay more at the pump, and the price at the pump is too high.

What it should signal to all of us here in Washington, particularly members on the Hill, is that there is an urgency to move forward on the initiatives that the President outlined in his State of the Union. As the President said, we are a nation that is addicted to oil, and we need to get off of that addiction to oil by developing new technologies and transforming the way we power our cars -- making use of ethanol, making use of hybrid batteries where, for the first 40 miles, you can run on a battery in your car and then switch over to another fuel type. And that's what the President is focused on.

We passed a -- there's not a short-term solution to the issue. That's why we acted last year and passed comprehensive energy legislation to reduce our dependence on foreign sources of energy. This is about addressing the root causes of high energy prices. We didn't get into this overnight, we're not going to get out of it overnight, but it's all the more reason why Congress should move forward and act on the Advanced Energy Initiative that the President proposed in his State of the Union.

Q: But is he concerned about the voters in November because of this?

MR. McCLELLAN: Well, the President is concerned about making sure that we are reducing our dependence on foreign sources of energy. He's looking at it in that context. We need to continue to act.

If you want to talk about the records and what we have done, then look at what we have done. We passed a comprehensive energy bill. Again, this is not something that we got into overnight. This has been a recurring issue over the years because we are addicted to oil and because we are dependent on foreign sources of energy.

The President wants to make us more energy self-sufficient. That's why he outlined the initiatives he did in his State of the Union, because it will build upon the steps we took last August when we passed a comprehensive energy strategy and helped to address the root causes of rising energy prices. You have

to go and address the root causes if you're going to fix this recurring problem. And that's what we're doing.

And that's -- as I mentioned at the top when I talked about the economy -- and I'm sure all of you are going to lead the newscast with the strong economy today and the 211,000 jobs that were created -- that's why I talked about, we need to continue to act, because Americans are concerned about rising health care costs. They are concerned about rising energy prices. And the President has a plan to address those issues. And we urge Congress to move forward on those initiatives.

Elaine, go ahead.

Q: You just joked about it just now, but can I ask you about that, about how this story is drowning out what the President is trying to do, and talking about --

MR. McCLELLAN: Well, in terms of the economic news, I know you all are going to cover it. And it's more good news, that our economy is healthy and strong and growing. And we're going to continue to talk about the importance of building upon the pro-growth policies that we have put in place to keep our economy the most competitive in the world, and to keep America the leader when it comes to growth and job creation.

Q: But does it make it more difficult to get his message out? Do you acknowledge that, at least?

MR. McCLELLAN: Does it make it more difficult to --

Q: Get his economic message out?

MR. McCLELLAN: Well, we're going to continue to focus on what we have done to get our economy growing. We've been through a lot over the last few years. But because of the tax cuts we put in place, our economy is growing very strongly. Now that's something that the President has talked about repeatedly. Our economic team is out today talking about it. So Americans are hearing about this news. But what's also important is that they hear about the initiatives that we are continuing to pursue to make sure that this economic expansion that we've been in for the last 17 quarters affects everyone in a positive way.

Q: Is the President satisfied that Treasury Secretary Snow has been an advocate of that to an effective level?

MR. McCLELLAN: The President said earlier today, when he was in an interview with some financial reporters, that Secretary Snow is doing a good job, and he appreciates the job he's doing.

Paula, go ahead.

Q: On veto authority. Up until today, the President has been saying that he would not veto appropriations bills as long as they kept their spending cut targets.

MR. McCLELLAN: As long as they hit the targets. You're saying that's why he hasn't used the veto?

Q: He has not been --

MR. McCLELLAN: Because he talks about the pie, when the pie meets your target, he doesn't feel like he can go in there, look at the individual slices. He doesn't have that authority, one. I mean, he wants to see a line-item veto act passed, and he appreciates the bipartisan support for that so that he could go in there and look at pieces within that pie.

Q: But he can look at those pieces -- he can veto any appropriations bill, and today he seemed to be just making a much broader threat --

MR. McCLELLAN: Well, but think about it, when he doesn't have the line-item veto authority -- think about it. When the President sets out a target, and says we're going to fund our priorities, and then we're going to hold the line on spending elsewhere, and Congress meets that target, what kind of signal does that send to members of Congress next time around? Well, oh, if he's -- if we're going to meet his target, and then he's going to go and veto it, then why should we adhere to what he has called for?

So that's the reason why he hasn't used it when it comes to spending bills. But he would like to have the line-item veto authority, so that he can look at earmarks and help Congress address that issue; so that he can line-item out wasteful spending within that overall pie.

But Congress has been acting to cut non-security discretionary spending. They acted last year, or this year, I guess, to reduce growth in mandatory spending, and that's important, as well. When we're talking about spending restraint, we need to look at the long-term problems that we face. And those come from entitlement programs. And we appreciate Congress moving forward on the Deficit Reduction Act.

Q: Thank you.

MR. McCLELLAN: Thank you.

END 1:45 P.M. EDT

(end transcript)

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Transcript: State Department Briefing, April 7

(Iraq, Palestinians, Venezuela, Germany, Iran, Cuba, Azerbaijan, United Nations, Peru, Japan) (3920)

State Department spokesman Sean McCormack briefed the press April 7.

Following is the transcript of the State Department briefing:

(begin transcript)

U.S. Department of State
Daily Press Briefing Index
Friday, April 7, 2006
1:48 p.m. EDT

Sean McCormack, Spokesman

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PALESTINIANS

-- U.S. Review of Assistance to Palestinians

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-- Reported Assault on U.S. Ambassador's Car

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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE DAILY PRESS BRIEFING

FRIDAY, APRIL 7, 2006
(ON THE RECORD UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED)

1:48 p.m. EDT

MR. MCCORMACK: Good afternoon, everyone. Barry, how are you?

QUESTION: Good.

MR. MCCORMACK: George, how are you doing?

QUESTION: Fine.

MR. MCCORMACK: Good. We've got -- I have a couple statements that I'd like to get into before we begin the briefing. The first is that:

"We condemn this most recent bombing of a mosque in Baghdad. There was significant loss of life. This was clearly perpetrated by those who wish to divide Iraq, who wish to encourage sectarian strife and it was perpetrated by individuals who clearly have no respect for religion. These bombs went off -- this bomb went off during Friday prayers intended to inflict mass casualties.

"So our thoughts and prayers are with the families of those who have lost loved ones in this attack and we wish a speedy recovery to all those who were injured in it. We call upon all to exercise restraint and calm in this period.

"We are going to be working very closely with the Iraqi Government to take appropriate measures to strengthen security to help to prevent similar types of attack in the future."

Also I have a statement from Secretary Rice. This is concerning Palestinian assistance:

"The United States remains committed to President Bush's vision of a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It is our desire to help provide for the basic humanitarian needs of the Palestinian people.

Consistent with these principles the United States will increase its humanitarian aid to help Palestinians in need. Basic humanitarian assistance -- including health, food and education -- will increase by 57 percent for a total of \$245 million. The United States will also provide \$42 million to strengthen civil society and independent institutions. Assistance will be administered through the United Nations Relief and Works Agency and non-Palestinian Authority actors, including local and international nongovernmental organizations.

"Because the new Hamas-led Palestinian government has failed to accept the Quartet principles of nonviolence, recognition of Israel and respect for previous agreements between the parties, the United States is suspending assistance to the Palestinian government's cabinet and ministries. The new Palestinian government must make -- must take responsibility for the consequences of its policies. The path back to the roadmap is clear -- acceptance of the three principles. If it accepts the Quartet principles, or a new government comes to power that accepts them, funding can be restored."

And with that, I'd be happy to take your questions. Okay. Thanks very much. See you. (Laughter.) Have a good weekend.

George, why don't you go then?

QUESTION: Are there no questions on this?

QUESTION: Well, we have a briefing on that.

QUESTION: Okay.

MR. MCCORMACK: That's fine.

QUESTION: I have a question --

QUESTION: Can I ask about --

MR. MCCORMACK: Sure.

QUESTION: (Inaudible.)

MR. MCCORMACK: It's open to you. That's the -- I'm here for you.

QUESTION: Was this coordinated with the Europeans? Because the Europeans have made a similar -- the EU has made a similar announcement today.

MR. MCCORMACK: There is discussion with the Europeans. David Welch was -- had been talking to his EU counterparts throughout this process. We are operating off the basis of the Quartet principles. Those were the guiding principles that led us both through this review. However, I have to emphasize that both reviews were done independently. The European Union conducted their review. We conducted our review. But there was certainly conversation about where we were in the process of our review, as well as what the principles were that we were using to assess our programs.

Charlie.

QUESTION: Can you clarify for me whether any assistance is going to continue to go to President Abbas since the government -- the Palestinian government is kind of multi-headed there?

MR. MCCORMACK: I think that that is still an open question at this point, Charlie. I think David will probably have a little bit more detail for you. He has recently returned from the region and has had some conversations with President Abbas as well as others on the presidential staff. So I think that he could probably fill you in a bit more on that particular question. But to my knowledge there is, at this point, not any assistance planned for President Abbas's office.

Teri.

QUESTION: You only said what you were spending. What are the numbers on what you're cutting?

MR. MCCORMACK: Okay. We have a fact sheet out for you and David and others can brief you on the details of this, but here's my understanding of this. There is a total of \$411 million worth of programs that are either suspended, cancelled or under further review. Of that \$411 million in cancelled, suspended or under review programs, we're going to redirect \$105 million so that we can increase humanitarian spending.

QUESTION: Is that included in the 245 then?

MR. MCCORMACK: Yes.

QUESTION: Okay.

MR. MCCORMACK: And to break down a little bit more of the suspended, cancelled, under review programs, you have \$165 million of that \$411 million total that is under ongoing review. Those programs fall into the categories of security, potential spending on security for border crossings, as well as a wastewater treatment plant. So that chunk of money is still under review. The remainder -- and then you have \$105 million which is going to be redirected so that -- and the remainder of that is now going to be -- is your total for programs that are suspended or cancelled.

QUESTION: Okay. And it's a little bit surprising that there isn't any money going to Abbas's office since you were always so careful to specify that money could continue going to his office.

MR. MCCORMACK: Teri, I'm not ruling it out. I'm not ruling it out. I'm just saying to my knowledge there -- in this stage of the review that there isn't money going to Abbas's office.

QUESTION: Do you know why not, like what held that up?

MR. MCCORMACK: You and David can get into a little bit more of the details on it.

QUESTION: Okay.

MR. MCCORMACK: Yes. Elise.

QUESTION: Do you have anything to say about the U.S. Ambassador to Venezuela, Bill Brownfield? His car was pelted with eggs and fruit and vegetables by supporters of government -- of President Chavez. And your Embassy spokesman is saying that the protest appears to be organized by the mayor of Caracas.

MR. MCCORMACK: I haven't seen those reports, Elise. Clearly, we are very concerned about any incidence that might affect the security of our embassy personnel, including the ambassador. And we believe it is an important responsibility for any host government to work with the American embassy to help ensure that our personnel are protected in the way that we would expect them to be protected and in

a way similar that we work with foreign embassies here in the United States to ensure that their personnel are protected.

QUESTION: Could you let us know if you have anything more specific on this particular incident?

MR. MCCORMACK: Sure.

QUESTION: It was very serious.

QUESTION: And also what have you asked -- I mean, you said you've asked the -- or these reports said that the U.S. has asked the Venezuelan Government for increased security because this isn't the first time that Ambassador Brownfield has been a target. Can you say -- and also this current report said that security officials did nothing to intervene in this attack.

MR. MCCORMACK: Teri, again, I haven't seen these reports. But clearly, if that is in fact the case, that would be a source of serious concern to us.

QUESTION: And can you confirm that you've asked Venezuela for more security and --

MR. MCCORMACK: Again, I haven't seen the reports so I haven't talked to anybody about that --

QUESTION: No, this has been an ongoing issue. Do you know whether in the past you have asked Venezuela?

MR. MCCORMACK: Teri, I haven't looked -- I haven't looked into the issue.

QUESTION: Okay.

QUESTION: Semi-related issue. In Berlin, a postal worker is said to have come in contact with some white powder that leaked out of a letter addressed to the U.S. Ambassador. Do you have anything on that?

MR. MCCORMACK: We'll look into for you, Charlie. I hadn't seen it.

QUESTION: Just curious.

QUESTION: Can you double back to the Iraq statement you made at the beginning?

MR. MCCORMACK: Sure.

QUESTION: Two thoughts, or two questions. Has the State Department noticed any increase in activity by Hamas? Not only in Iraq but elsewhere there have been reports they're engaged in this -- you know, problems, in this unstable country or in that unstable country.

And secondly, you're going to talk to the Iraqis about improving security. Is there anything to be gained and do you try talking to Arab governments to see if they could possibly weigh in and do some good?

MR. MCCORMACK: On the first part of your question, Barry, I don't have any information on that.

QUESTION: Okay.

MR. MCCORMACK: On the part about the Arab governments, certainly we encourage Arab governments to in any way they can support the Iraqi Government, whether that's politically, diplomatically, economically or with other kinds of assistance. So certainly we have encouraged for some time the Arab governments to play a positive role in Iraq. We continue to encourage them to do so. Each government is going to respond in a different way to that -- to that --

QUESTION: No, I meant particularly with training to restrain Hamas.

MR. MCCORMACK: Barry, with respect to Hamas, you know, we have talked with foreign governments about our views of Hamas as a terrorist organization. As for whether Hamas is involved in any activities in Iraq, I don't have any information for you on that and I hadn't seen those reports.

Yes, Elise.

QUESTION: Is this still on that? Hamas?

QUESTION: It was on Iran.

QUESTION: On Iran?

QUESTION: Yeah.

QUESTION: So is mine.

QUESTION: Go ahead, go ahead.

MR. MCCORMACK: He's sitting in the second row. You're in the third. See, he's first.

QUESTION: I'm sure you can't update us on the talks. There have been reports, however, out of Tehran that they wanted talks with the Americans in Baghdad as soon as this weekend, meeting perhaps in a third embassy.

MR. MCCORMACK: No meeting scheduled.

QUESTION: Well, what about this idea that there will be no talks until the Iraqis have formed their government and put forward their own people for this meeting?

MR. MCCORMACK: We don't have -- don't have a timeline for such a meeting. Ambassador Khalilzad, as you know, has for some time had the authorization to have a meeting with his counterpart concerning issues of mutual concern in Iraq. We've had concerns about the Iranians' behavior in Iraq. We are calling for good, neighborly, transparent relations between Iraq and Iran.

As for whether there will be a meeting, we'll see. Ambassador Khalilzad does have that authorization so we'll try to keep you updated if, in fact, there is a meeting.

QUESTION: So you still want this meeting to go ahead?

MR. MCCORMACK: Again, there -- again, this is something that Zal has had the authority to do for some time, going back into the fall. We made back in the fall time an initial offer to the Iranian Government saying that this channel of communication was open on this narrow set of topics. They had no interest in it at that time.

Now that they find themselves under the scrutiny and the harsh spotlight of the international community concerning their nuclear activities, all of a sudden they're interested. So at this point there is not a meeting scheduled and we'll see. We'll see if there is such a meeting. We'll try to -- like I said, we'll try to keep you updated.

QUESTION: Did you notice that ElBaradei is going there?

MR. MCCORMACK: I did. I saw that.

QUESTION: And do you have any reflections on --

MR. MCCORMACK: Inasmuch as his trip involves reinforcing the message to the Iranian Government that it must come into compliance with its NPT obligations, that it must heed the call of the IAEA Board of Governors, then that certainly is positive.

QUESTION: So you think he will be reinforcing the --

MR. MCCORMACK: Well, we certainly hope that that is the message that he will be sending.

QUESTION: Just -- oh, you remember those Iranian exercises that -- I don't know if it was you or Adam was talking about the other day? Do you have anything new on that? There's some British think tank that finds some cause for concern over something called a flying boat, and I don't even know what a flying boat is. (Laughter.) But they have found reason for concern. This is in --

QUESTION: Howard Hughes.

QUESTION: Hmm?

QUESTION: Howard Hughes.

QUESTION: Howard Hughes. I think he's dead now.

You don't have anything new to say?

MR. MCCORMACK: I don't have anything new.

QUESTION: You're going to dismiss as, you know, they bloviate, they kind of exaggerate their prowess. But you have nothing new on an assessment of --

MR. MCCORMACK: I have nothing new on that assessment, Barry.

QUESTION: And do you know what a flying boat is? No?

MR. MCCORMACK: I've seen pictures of flying boats. Yeah.

Elise.

QUESTION: This is about Iranian journalists in the U.S. There are a couple of, I think, a handful of visas that you gave Iranian journalists and some of them, particularly the ones that worked for the Iranian News Agency, have the same restrictions as diplomats in the sense that they're limited to a 25-mile radius of New York. Now, in recent months, you've talked about the need to increase cultural exchanges and try and forge more understanding about the Iranian people and the United States. Do you think it would be wise to kind of give Iranian journalists more of a license to travel the country so as to bring that greater understanding of America back home?

MR. MCCORMACK: You're certainly right that we are seeking ways to speak directly to the Iranian people. Officials from the State Department and other government agencies on a regular basis do interviews with Persian language media outlets that broadcast into Iran.

As for the government journalists, I don't -- I'm not aware of any move at this point to reexamine these -- any restrictions that may be placed upon their movement. I would assume that there are good reasons for those restrictions. I'll be happy to check into the matter whether or not there is any -- there's any interest in revisiting whether or not there will be any changes to those restrictions.

QUESTION: I understand --

MR. MCCORMACK: But I would underscore the fact that there are -- there are a lot of different ways to speak directly to the Iranian people, a number of different outlets. And as I said, our officials on a regular basis appear on those outlets.

QUESTION: Understood. But I mean, in terms of the whole idea of cultural exchanges, isn't it better for Iranians themselves to see what America's like and put that back home, as opposed to State Department officials or any government officials kind of giving -- you know, trying to speak about America? I mean, isn't it better to hear from the Iranians?

MR. MCCORMACK: Well, it doesn't -- in a sense it doesn't really matter who's doing the interview. I know it matters to some of you. But the important point for us is the ability to speak directly to the Iranian people and the message that we send in certainly the hopes that the Iranian people are listening.

QUESTION: Sean, yesterday you were asked about the so-called smuggling event from Cuba.

MR. MCCORMACK: Right.

QUESTION: I wondered is there an update. Specifically I guess what we were looking for is identification of the dead person.

MR. MCCORMACK: Right. Don't have anything --

QUESTION: No?

MR. MCCORMACK: Nothing new on that -- on that part.

QUESTION: Okay. And have you got consular access to the two people taken -- detained?

QUESTION: Can you give us your general update on the situation?

QUESTION: Or whatever.

MR. MCCORMACK: Sure.

QUESTION: If you have a fresh account.

MR. MCCORMACK: Yes.

MR. MCCORMACK: Our Interests Section in Havana can confirm that there are two Americans that are currently in Cuban custody. They were taken into custody following an incident in which the Cuban border patrol fired on a boat in Cuban waters. They were carrying -- this boat was carrying these two Americans plus an unidentified individual who was killed.

At this point, we don't have a Privacy Act waiver so we're unable to provide further information on the American citizens. U.S. consular officials are seeking consular access to them in custody, so we haven't gotten consular access at this point.

QUESTION: So you know they were -- they are Americans?

MR. MCCORMACK: Right.

QUESTION: But the dead fellow you don't know?

MR. MCCORMACK: Don't know. That's right.

QUESTION: Has consular access been denied or you're just in the process of seeking it?

MR. MCCORMACK: We're in the process of seeking it.

QUESTION: Is there a problem, Sean?

MR. MCCORMACK: They're in Cuba.

QUESTION: But -- I understand that -- where are they being held in Cuba? Are they in a jail? Are they --

MR. MCCORMACK: I assume they're -- they're in custody with -- I don't know exactly --

QUESTION: You don't have any more detail?

MR. MCCORMACK: I don't know exactly -- I don't have any more details for you, Teri.

QUESTION: Okay. And do you -- is there any specific thing that's holding up identification of the third person? Do we have to ask Cuban officials to let us ID the third person?

MR. MCCORMACK: We don't -- (computer chirp). That was an interesting noise, Charlie, from your computer. (Laughter.) Of course, in this particular circumstance we'd be dependent on Cuban authorities to allow access or to provide the information.

QUESTION: Okay. And you don't have any independent evidence as to what they were doing when they were shot at?

MR. MCCORMACK: This is the information that we have.

QUESTION: All right.

QUESTION: Sean?

MR. MCCORMACK: Yes.

QUESTION: I had a -- I have a couple of things, but --

MR. MCCORMACK: Okay.

QUESTION: Just a clarification on the Palestinian aid. My understanding was that the overall budget for Palestinians for this year was only \$150 million.

MR. MCCORMACK: Right.

QUESTION: So we're talking about --

MR. MCCORMACK: And David and his compatriots, when they come up here, can explain this in greater detail. But when we're talking about this money, this is what they refer to in Washington as multi-year money. So it has -- the government is authorized to spend it across a period of time, not restricted to one fiscal year. So some of this funding goes back to the previous administration, I think, to some funds that were not spent. So again, the budget experts can explain in greater detail the breakdown of this money from current fiscal year money as well as past fiscal year money.

QUESTION: I was looking for a readout on the Azerbaijan Foreign Minister's meeting with the Secretary.

MR. MCCORMACK: The Secretary met with the Azerbaijan Foreign Minister. They discussed a number of issues of bilateral interest, both to the United States and Azerbaijan. They talked about Nagorno-Karabakh. They talked about economic reform and democratization in Azerbaijan. The Secretary emphasized the importance of respect for human rights and moving forward on the democratization process in Azerbaijan.

QUESTION: Can I have a follow-up?

MR. MCCORMACK: I don't think Dave is done yet.

QUESTION: Was there any talk of a visit to the United States by the President of Azerbaijan?

MR. MCCORMACK: Inasmuch as a visit to the United States by the President of Azerbaijan might concern the White House, I'll leave it to the White House to discuss such visits -- potential visits.

QUESTION: Nagorno-Karabakh was the very first initiative that Secretary Powell dove into when he took office. And I was just wondering if Secretary Rice had any inclination to become more involved in mediating the conflict.

MR. MCCORMACK: She actually has been very much involved in this. There was a recent meeting in Rambouillet, France where we had great hopes that the two presidents, the Armenian and the Azerbaijani president, would be able to come to some resolution, some agreement on the issue of Nagorno-Karabakh.

In advance of that meeting, the Secretary spoke with both of the presidents. And she has also been very much involved with Assistant Secretary Dan Fried as well as others who have been working to move this issue towards a resolution. So she's certainly up to date on where the discussions stand. We hope that both sides can -- in the wake of the talks in France, again provide some renewed impetus to those discussions and come to an agreement that would resolve this longstanding issue.

QUESTION: I have one. There's a report that the U.S. is holding up the money for UN renovation. We want the cost to be lower than the United Nations is asking for. Do you have anything on that?

MR. MCCORMACK: I can check into it for you, Teri.

QUESTION: Okay.

MR. MCCORMACK: George.

QUESTION: Do you have anything to say about the presidential election in Peru on Sunday?

MR. MCCORMACK: Well, there's -- we're looking forward to what we hope is a free and fair election in Peru. It's going to be -- it's a closely contested election, so we will await the outcome. We look forward to working with the democratically elected leader of Peru on a number of important issues of interest both to Peru and the United States.

Yes, ma'am.

QUESTION: This is regarding the base relocation talks in Japan. They're able to get -- the Japanese Government and the local authorities were able to come to an agreement regarding the relocation of Futenma Base to Camp Schwab. And do you think that this time there'll be some forward movements in the talks?

MR. MCCORMACK: I have seen those news reports and I think at this point the Department of Defense is reviewing the proposal from the Japanese side and I think that they'd be in a better position to give you a detailed read of where -- what their thoughts on the -- what their thoughts are on that proposal.

QUESTION: Thank you.

MR. MCCORMACK: Okay. Thanks.

(The briefing was concluded at 1:48 p.m.)

(end transcript)

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*EUR503 04/07/2006

State Department Issues Report Detailing Progress in Iraq
(Report finds progress in politics, economics, security, despite violence) (200)

Washington -- Iraq's economy nearly doubled from 2002 to 2005, despite disruptions from terrorists and insurgents, the State Department said in its first presidential report to Congress detailing progress in Iraq in the areas of politics, economics and security.

Water and sewage services in Iraq have been rehabilitated and immunization campaigns for children have been carried out, the department said in an April 7 media note summarizing the conclusions of the report.

Iraqi politicians are making progress toward forming a government despite the bombing of the Golden Mosque in Samarra in February by attackers who sought to start a civil war, the report says, and in the realm of security, Iraqi soldiers and policemen continue to be trained and equipped.

As for the challenges, the report says the defense and interior ministries face multiple administrative challenges and the chains of command in the two ministries are undermined by militia and criminal elements, the note said. It added that Iraq's local and provincial governments face difficulties stemming from a long-history of centralized rule from Baghdad.

The media note (<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2006/64250.htm>) and the report (<http://www.state.gov/p/nea/rls/rpt/>) are available on the State Department Web site.

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*EUR504 04/07/2006

Text: U.S. Envoy to Iraq Condemns Bombing of Baghdad's Buratha Mosque
(Bombers target worshippers gathered for Friday prayers) (370)

U.S. Ambassador to Iraq Zalmay Khalilzad condemned the April 7 bombing of the Buratha Mosque in Baghdad, which killed at least 79 worshippers and wounded more than 160 people leaving the mosque following Friday prayers.

"The terrorists who seek to murder innocent people who worship at Iraq's holy sites and religious institutions are the enemies of all faiths and of all humanity," Khalilzad said in a written statement. "The United States condemns this cowardly act in the strongest possible terms."

According to wire reports, two or three assailants entered the Shi'a mosque dressed in black abayas and detonated themselves among the worshippers. The attack comes one day after a minivan loaded with explosives blew up outside another Shi'a mosque, the Imam Ali shrine in Najaf. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=washfile-english&y=2006&m=April&x=20060406145746ndyblehs0.526211&t=livefeeds/wf-latest.html>).)

Khalilzad urged Iraqis to show restraint in the wake of the attack and "to continue to resist the provocation to sectarian violence." He pledged the United States' assistance in bringing the perpetrators to justice.

For additional information, see Iraq Update (http://usinfo.state.gov/mena/middle_east_north_africa/iraq.html).

Following is the text of Khalilzad's statement:

(begin text)

Embassy of the United States of America
Baghdad, Iraq

Embassy Spokesman's Office
Phone: (914) 360-6452
Iraqna: 07901-819-314
Email: BaghdadPressOffice@state.gov

NEWS RELEASE

Statement by U.S. Ambassador to Iraq Zalmay Khalilzad
On the Bombing of the Buratha Mosque
April 7, 2006

I offer my sincerest condolences to the people of Iraq in the wake of the vicious bombing attack on worshippers at the Buratha mosque in Baghdad. The terrorists who seek to murder innocent people who worship at Iraq's holy sites and religious institutions are the enemies of all faiths and of all humanity. The United States condemns this cowardly act in the strongest possible terms.

I urge all Iraqis to exercise restraint in the wake of this tragedy, to come together to fight terror, to continue to resist the provocation to sectarian violence, and to pursue justice within the framework of Iraq's laws and constitution. The United States will continue to do everything in its power to assist the Government of Iraq in bringing to justice those responsible for this heinous crime.

May God bless the people of Iraq.

(end text)

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*EUR505 04/07/2006

Rumsfeld, U.K.'s Reid Vow Support for Iraqi Political Process
(British, U.S. defense ministers express their support for Iraqi deliberations) (420)
By Jacquelyn S. Porth
Washington File Staff Writer

Washington -- The British and U.S. defense ministers concluded a bilateral meeting April 6 in which they focused on Iraq, but also discussed Afghanistan and other bilateral military issues such as the Joint Strike Fighter program.

In a joint press briefing following their meeting, both officials addressed progress in Iraq since liberation as well as remaining problems. Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld pointed to the more than 250,000 Iraqi security forces that are on the job and are trained and equipped.

British Secretary of State for Defense John Reid said this is the time for Iraq's politicians to come together and form the government of national unity that the country so needs. "I am convinced that there is the will in Iraq for people from different backgrounds, different ethnic groups to come together and form a government of national unity," he said.

At the same time, Reid said members of the coalition must remain firm in their support of the Iraqi political process. "Our response should be to hold firm and give maximum unity inside Iraq and maximum unity outside," Reid said. It is a time not only for being firm, he said, but also for "holding our nerve in Iraq."

Producing a democracy in Iraq is proving difficult, Rumsfeld acknowledged, but he said that Iraqis are stepping forward and putting themselves at risk in an effort to provide the leadership that is needed.

"They're negotiating ... meeting with each other ... talking ... as opposed to shooting at each other," Rumsfeld said. In the end, he said, the solution will be an Iraqi one not an American or British one -- "as it should be."

Rumsfeld said the ethnic mix of forces affiliated with the Iraqi Ministry of Defense has become more balanced, but Ministry of Interior recruitment has been less satisfactory.

He also said Ministry of Defense forces made faster progress also, as a result of having U.S. military forces embedded within their units to suggest ways to address potential weaknesses and pitfalls such as leadership problems or gaps in logistics.

Rumsfeld said coalition forces increasingly are embedding now as part of the Ministry of Interior forces. As a result, he said, "We expect to see [this year] a fairly substantial improvement in the performance of the Ministry of Interior."

The transcript (<http://www.defenselink.mil/transcripts/2006/tr20060406-12773.html>) of the briefing is available on the Defense Department's Web site.

(The Washington File is a product of the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://usinfo.state.gov>)

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*EUR506 04/07/2006

Iraqi Government Declares April 9 "Iraqi Freedom Day"

(Iraqis have seen amazing progress in three years, says coalition spokesman) (240)

Washington -- To commemorate Iraq's liberation three years ago, when coalition forces removed Saddam Hussein's regime from power, the Iraqi government has declared April 9 "Iraqi Freedom Day," says U.S. Army Major General Rick Lynch, spokesman for Multi-National Force - Iraq.

"Sometimes we get so caught up in the events of the day, the struggle to form a national unity government, the most recent [insurgent attack], that we forget the progress that has been made in the last three years," Lynch told journalists at an April 6 press briefing in Baghdad, Iraq.

When the coalition's final drive on April 7, 2003, ended its rapid, dramatic "thunder run" in the heart of Baghdad two days later, "the people of the world knew that the coalition was there to free the people of Iraq," Lynch said.

He said April 9 was chosen for the commemoration because it is the anniversary of the date the world watched as the statue of Saddam Hussein was toppled in Firdos Square.

Released from dictatorship, the Iraqis have made amazing progress since 2003, Lynch said, including holding several free elections, convening a Council of Representatives, drafting and ratifying a constitution, working to form a national unity government and, currently, prosecuting Saddam for crimes committed against the Iraqi people. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/mena/Archive/2006/Feb/16-226361.html>).)

For more information, see Iraq Update (http://usinfo.state.gov/mena/middle_east_north_africa/iraq.html).

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*EUR507 04/07/2006

Iraqi, Coalition Forces Capture Top Insurgent Leader
(Ayman believed to have close ties to al-Zarqawi, Army spokesman says) (700)
By David I. McKeeby
Washington File Staff Writer

Washington -- Coalition forces in Iraq have announced the capture of Muhammed Hila Hammad Ubaydi, also known as Abu Ayman, a key insurgent leader believed to have close ties with the Jordanian-born terrorist leader of al-Qaida in Iraq, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, according to U.S. Army spokesman Major General Rick Lynch.

"Apprehension of a guy like Abu Ayman is going to help us work our way toward al-Zarqawi in just a matter of time," Lynch told journalists in an April 6 briefing in Baghdad, Iraq.

Iraqi forces captured Ayman in a March 7 raid on a southern Baghdad neighborhood. Lynch said that Ayman's detention was not publicly announced for a month so that investigators could confirm his identity through DNA testing.

A former aide in Saddam Hussein's intelligence service, Ayman led an insurgent group called the Secret Islamic Army, which was active in Northern Babil province, according to an April 6 press release issued by the U.S. military's Central Command (CENTCOM).

Ayman is the prime suspect in the February kidnapping of Italian journalist Giuliana Sgrena, as well as assassination attempts against several Iraqi government and security force leaders. He also is believed responsible for numerous kidnappings, executions and terrorist bombings. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/mena/Archive/2006/Mar/30-432726.html>).)

The CENTCOM release states that Ayman's capture will save lives by preventing future attacks and provide information leading to the capture of other terrorists.

TWO OTHER MAJOR INSURGENCY FIGURES IN CUSTODY

Ayman's arrest follows the December 27, 2005, capture of his Syrian-born lieutenant, Abu Qatada, who was wanted by Iraqi authorities for multiple bombings, the assassinations of two Iraqi government council members and the murders of several Iraqi citizens.

In the months following his capture, Lynch said that Qatada has provided valuable information on the Abu Ayman terror network.

Lynch also reported that Iraqi authorities have completed their prosecution of Abu Taha, the emir of Mosul, who is believed to be among Zarqawi's closest advisers. Taha was captured in June 2005 and has been sentenced to death by Iraqi authorities for kidnappings, bombings, and charges related to other terrorist activities.

IRAQI FORCES CONTINUE PROGRESS AGAINST INSURGENCY

In a series of major counterinsurgency operations during the week of April 5, Iraqi and coalition forces have made significant strides in seizing weapons and bomb-making materials, Lynch said.

"We are taking away the bomb makers, we are taking away the munitions, and we are taking away the cells that are planning to conduct these activities," Lynch said.

Over the past five months, Lynch said that Iraqi and coalition forces have conducted more than 8,200 operations against insurgents -- an average of 65 operations per day. He said that nearly one-third of these operations were independently planned and executed by Iraqi security forces. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/mena/Archive/2006/Mar/28-82714.html>).)

Across the country, Iraqi military and police are increasingly in the lead, Lynch said. In a joint operation, Iraqi and coalition forces killed two insurgents and detained eight others as they attempted to plant bombs in the northeastern city of Kirkuk.

As part of "Operation Red Light II," Iraqi security forces, acting on intelligence, conducted a raid that resulted in the detention of 17 insurgents and seizure of four weapons caches in Salah-al-Din province, Lynch said. Seized items included four surface-to-air missiles, more than 100 artillery charges and hundreds of fuses and blasting caps.

In western Iraq, Lynch said that Iraqi and coalition forces are preventing foreign fighters from slipping into Baghdad through the Euphrates River Valley, thereby causing a drop in the number of suicide bombings. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/mena/Archive/2006/Mar/23-648938.html>).)

Iraqi and coalition forces detained 14 insurgents and seized sizeable weapons caches as part of "Operation Sterling" in the southern cities of Basra and al-Hillah.

In Baghdad, Lynch said "Operation Scales of Justice," an increased citywide security presence, is continuing. With an average of 90 patrols in the city at any given time, Iraqi and coalition forces have seized 26 insurgent weapons caches. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/mena/Archive/2006/Mar/31-79971.html>).)

For more information, see Iraq Update (http://usinfo.state.gov/mena/middle_east_north_africa/iraq.html).

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*EUR508 04/07/2006

Review of European Security Issues

(Islamist 'insurgency' threatens Europe, U.S.; tolerance among Europe's Muslims; Rice visits Germany, France, U.K.; bioterror conference for Europe, Eurasia; Kosovo talks and Serb boycott; Bosnian constitution; disaster planning in Southeast Europe) (1720)

Following are some recent U.S. government policy pronouncements, hearings and reports on security issues in Europe and Eurasia, as well as some noteworthy announcements by international organizations and nongovernmental organizations.

For additional coverage of the topics listed below and related issues, see Europe and Eurasia (<http://usinfo.state.gov/eur/>).

U.S., EUROPE MUST FIGHT ISLAMISM EXTREMISM AS AN "INSURGENCY"

Global terrorism can be compared to an insurgency of Islamist extremists who seek to topple moderate governments, senior U.S. diplomats told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on April 5.

Defeating these militants requires an international counter-insurgency strategy that includes close cooperation between Europe and the United States to win the "battle of ideas," Henry Crumpton, the State Department's coordinator for counterterrorism, told the Senate committee's panel on European affairs.

"Given that the overall terrorist threat resembles an insurgency," Crumpton testified, "we must develop a counter-insurgency strategy that incorporates all the tools of government to attack the enemy, deny safe haven, and address the socio-economic and political needs of at-risk populations."

Crumpton was accompanied by Daniel Fried, assistant secretary of state for European and Eurasian affairs, who outlined steps the United States is taking to open up channels of communication between Muslim communities in Europe and the United States. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/eur/Archive/2006/Apr/06-77034.html>).)

Fried stressed that in discussing extremism, he and Crumpton were not referring to "the vast number of Muslims living in Europe who, like most Muslims anywhere, have no radical agenda." Violent extremists constitute "a miniscule minority," he said.

Crumpton said a militant network based in Europe planned and carried out the terror attacks of September 11, 2001, followed by several large-scale terror attacks in Europe.

"We must fight the enemy in the arena of ideas," Crumpton said, "ideas suffused with justice, integrity and virtue. ... We need to counter the terrorist network by building alternative networks." (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/eur/Archive/2006/Jan/24-500110.html>).)

NEARLY ALL OF EUROPE'S MUSLIM'S SEEK TOLERANCE, EXPERT SAYS

Only a tiny minority of European Muslims favors the radical militant philosophy of jihadism, which calls for the violent overthrow of moderate and secular governments, a U.S. security expert told Congress on April 5.

Mary Habeck, an associate professor of strategic studies at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, testified that only about 5 percent of Muslims in Europe believe Islam should have control over the government, a philosophy known as Islamism. And the "vast majority" of these Islamists believes in a gradual political and social process to achieve long-term goals, she said.

Fully 95 percent of Muslims in Europe "are moderate or traditional Muslims who disagree profoundly with this vision of Islam," Habeck told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, where she was asked to discuss Islamist extremism in Europe.

However, a radical minority -- known as jihadis -- has decided that "only violence will allow them to create the perfect Islamic state," Habeck said. The jihadis are especially problematic because they believe democracy is a direct contradiction of how they interpret Islamic law, she said. They also claim that anyone who supports democracy - even those who consider themselves moderate Muslims -- can be

killed without violating religious law. This mindset, Habeck said, helps explain why jihadis express little if any ethical concern if innocent Muslims are killed in terrorist attacks.

"Jihadism is a growing threat to Europe," Habeck testified. "Jihadist leaders actively seek young disillusioned Muslims and work very hard to recruit them, winning them away from their traditional beliefs to a radicalism that promises answers to all their problems."

Approximately 15 to 20 million Muslims live in Western Europe -- representing about 5 percent of the population -- and their numbers are expected to double again in less than 20 years. Most arrived as "guest workers" or refugees to countries that frequently do not grant automatic citizenship to the children of immigrants.

Habeck's written testimony, as well as testimony by other experts, is posted on the Web site (<http://foreign.senate.gov/testimony/2006/HabeckTestimony060405.pdf>) of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

RICE IN EUROPE DEFENDS U.S. POLICIES ON TERROR, IRAQ

Delivering a major foreign policy speech while visiting Europe, Secretary of State

Condoleezza Rice defended the U.S. prosecution of the war on terrorism and the intervention in Iraq.

Acknowledging concern in Europe and other parts of the world that the United States has emphasized security at the expense of respect for the law and human rights, Rice said March 31 that "no one should ever doubt the U.S. commitment to justice and the rule of law."

Speaking at a Chatham House-sponsored lecture in Blackburn, a town in northern England, Rice said the United States does not tolerate torture. "We also have no desire to be the world's jailer," she added. "We want the terrorists that we captured to stand trial for their crimes."

However, the secretary said, "we also recognize that we are fighting a new kind of war, and that our citizens will judge us harshly if we release a captured terrorist before we are absolutely certain that he does not possess information that could prevent a future attack, or even worse, if we meet that terrorist again on the battlefield." (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/dhr/Archive/2006/Apr/03-967032.html>).)

Rice also met with leaders in Germany and France and made an unannounced visit to Iraq.

EURASIAN, EUROPEAN SCIENTISTS COUNTER BIOTERRORISM THREAT

More than 50 leading scientists and biotechnology industry representatives from Russia, Ukraine, Kazakhstan, Georgia, Azerbaijan and Uzbekistan plan to participate in the Biotechnology Industry Organization's annual conference in Chicago April 9-12. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/eur/Archive/2006/Apr/06-236987.html>).)

This is part of the BioIndustry Initiative (BII) that grew out of the 2001 commitment between President Bush and Russian President Vladimir Putin to pursue cooperation to counter the threat of bioterrorism. The BII, a program of the State Department's Office of Cooperative Threat Reduction, helps support the transformation to civilian functions of former Soviet biological research and production capacities.

The BII is working with the International Science and Technology Center (ISTC) in Moscow and the Science and Technology Center of Ukraine (STCU) in Kiev to support attendance of the Eurasian and European scientists at the conference, which is called BIO 2006. (See BII fact sheet (<http://usinfo.state.gov/eur/Archive/2004/Sep/27-700151.html>)).

THIRD ROUND OF KOSOVO TALKS; END TO SERB BOYCOTT URGED

A third round of negotiations between Serbia and Kosovo Albanian officials on Kosovo's future status ended without agreement on April 3, and the next round is scheduled for April 28, the Southeast European Times reported. The talks took place in Vienna, Austria, and have focused on ways to provide greater freedom for local governments to manage their own affairs.

According to U.N. officials, Serbs continued to insist on autonomy for their municipalities and strong ties to Belgrade. The Kosovar Albanian delegation was opposed to what it viewed as a bid to create a Serb entity in the province.

Meanwhile, Kosovar Albanians, as well as international officials, continue to urge Kosovar Serbs to end their two-year boycott of Kosovo politics. Kosovar Serb leaders claim their presence is only "decorative" and gives the incorrect impression that they play a meaningful role in governing the province.

The United States has been encouraged by the initial status talks, but U.S. diplomats also urge the two former warring parties to start discussing more difficult issues soon. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/eur/Archive/2006/Mar/29-789300.html>).)

The first round of talks took place in February. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/eur/Archive/2006/Feb/23-719714.html>).) The U.N.-sponsored talks could lead to either independence or autonomy for Kosovo, which is a province of Serbia-Montenegro. Kosovo has been administered by the United Nations since U.S. and NATO forces drove out Yugoslav troops in 1999 following human-rights abuses. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/eur/Archive/2006/Mar/13-771674.html>).)

U.S. WELCOMES BOSNIAN CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM AGREEMENT

The United States welcomed the March 18 constitutional reform agreement reached among the leaders of Bosnia-Herzegovina's major political parties, State Department spokesman Sean McCormack said in a statement March 20.

"The agreement follows months of hard work by the parties towards fulfilling their commitment to Secretary Rice made at events commemorating the Dayton Peace Accords on November 22, 2005," McCormack said. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/eur/Archive/2006/Mar/21-836669.html>).)

On that date, Bosnian leaders met with U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice at the State Department and pledged to undertake constitutional reform and to complete their work by March 2006. Rice urged the Bosnians to modernize and strengthen the weak, divided state with its three-member presidency created by the Dayton Peace Accords in 1995. "To seize the opportunities of the 21st century," she said, "we must now transform Dayton." (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/eur/Archive/2005/Nov/22-702424.html>).)

The new constitutional reform agreement streamlines the Bosnian presidency and creates a stronger and more effective national Council of Ministers and parliament, said McCormack. "These are significant first steps towards modernizing the structures established by the Dayton Peace Accords and towards creating a more functional state ready to take its place in Euro-Atlantic institutions," he said.

U.S. PROMOTES DISASTER PLANNING IN SOUTHEAST EUROPE

If countries talk to each other while planning for possible natural disasters, the increased cooperation also can have enormous political benefits by helping reduce long-standing cross-border tensions, a U.S. diplomat says.

"Working together to prepare for disaster can lead to working together for a better future," U.S. Ambassador to Croatia Ralph Frank told a regional conference in Dubrovnik, Croatia. The Southeast

Europe Disaster Preparedness Conference took place March 20-24. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/eur/Archive/2006/Mar/22-416263.html>).)

Participating countries included Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, Hungary, Macedonia, Moldova, Romania, Serbia-Montenegro, Slovenia and Turkey. Southeast Europe is an active earthquake region, and many of the countries attending the conference have suffered severe earthquakes in recent decades. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/gi/Archive/2006/Jan/06-54303.html>).)

The United States can make a contribution to the region by offering a “cross-border perspective,” Frank said on the opening day of the conference, which was co-sponsored by the George C. Marshall European Center for Security Studies and the European Union’s Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe. (See Marshall Center (<http://www.marshallcenter.org/site-graphic/lang-en/page-mc-index-1/top-mc-news.htm>) Web site.)

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"Battle for Ideas" Critical in Countering Islamist Extremism, Says Fried
(Diplomats also say global terrorism requires counterinsurgency strategy) (660)

By Vince Crawley

Washington File Staff Writer

Washington -- Global terrorism resembles an insurgency against existing governments and requires an international counterinsurgency strategy that includes close U.S.-European cooperation to win the “battle of ideas,” senior U.S. diplomats told Congress April 5.

The United States cooperates closely with Europe on counterterrorism measures, “but we must also intensify our efforts to counter the extremist ideas that drive Islamist terrorism,” said Daniel Fried, assistant secretary of state for European and Eurasian affairs. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/eur/Archive/2006/Jan/24-500110.html>).)

“It also requires us to demonstrate through our own nation’s experience that Muslims can be patriotic, democratic and religious at the same time,” he told a Senate hearing on Islamist Extremism in Europe.

Fried stressed that in discussing extremism, he was not referring to “the vast number of Muslims living in Europe who, like most Muslims anywhere, have no radical agenda.” Violent extremists constitute “a miniscule minority,” he said.

European leaders, Fried said, “are devoting more energy to integrating Muslim communities into the secular mainstream, with a focus on economic development, job creation, and improved social services,” but added that “it does not go far enough, as many European leaders recognize.”

The United States has its own initiatives, including exchange and outreach programs to help Muslim communities in Europe share ideas and voice concerns with their American counterparts, said Fried.

“One of our main goals is to improve European Muslims’ understanding of the United States and deepen their appreciation for our relative success in achieving integration,” he said. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/eur/Archive/2006/Apr/02-889005.html>).)

Fried added that given the United States’ history and its current debate about illegal immigration, “Americans must be careful and modest in assessing others’ efforts to deal with challenges of national identity in multi-ethnic and multi-religious states.”

Harry Crumpton, the State Department's coordinator for counterterrorism, also spoke at the hearing. He said the overall terrorist threat "resembles an insurgency" and that the United States "must develop a counter-insurgency strategy that incorporates all the tools of government to attack the enemy, deny safe haven and address the socio-economic and political needs of at-risk populations."

"To be successful we will need to address both the immediate, direct threat posed by terrorism today, and the long-term potential for growth in extremism," he said.

Not only must there be "a traditional campaign using our judicial, law enforcement, financial, military and diplomatic resources," Crumpton said, but at the same time the United States "must fight the enemy in the arena of ideas, ideas suffused with justice, integrity, and virtue."

He added that the United States "must also work with our partners to find alternative ways to meet people's social and economic needs and prevent them from gravitating toward extremist networks." (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/eur/Archive/2006/Jan/19-872021.html>).)

Fried testified that "many, perhaps most Muslims in Western Europe are outside the mainstream in several respects. They are a minority. ... Muslim struggles with unemployment, discrimination and integration have created an audience potentially open to receiving an extremist message."

These factors, combined with "a deeply negative perception of U.S. foreign policy among Western Europe's Muslims" and "relative freedom of movement across the Atlantic" result in "a particularly dangerous mix," Fried said.

"For European Muslims to believe they are full members of society," he said, "both the majority and minority populations need to better understand and respect each other. Prejudice and discrimination must be countered."

The prepared statements (<http://foreign.senate.gov/hearings/2006/hr060405p.html>) of Fried, Crumpton and others, including U.S. Ambassador to Belgium Tom Korologos, are available on the Web site of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

For additional information, see the notice of April 11 webchat (<http://usinfo.state.gov/eur/Archive/2006/Apr/04-383678.html>) on Muslim integration and community outreach in the United States and a related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/eur/Archive/2005/Sep/07-600416.html>) on a previous USINFO webchat on this issue.

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Transcript: State's Fried Outlines U.S. Policy for "Murrow" Journalists
(Says promotion of democracy to be enduring legacy of Bush administration) (5320)

The United States will continue to support democratic movements in the Middle East as well as in former Soviet states as a means of countering Islamist extremism "and the terrorism derived from that extremism," said Assistant Secretary of State Daniel Fried April 4.

Fried spoke during a roundtable discussion with participants from the Edward R. Murrow Program for Journalists, a new State Department initiative that brings foreign reporters to the United States to learn about American journalistic practices. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/dhr/Archive/2005/Dec/14-677471.html>).)

The Bush administration looks at democracy as a “practical solution” to problems such as instability and poor economic development, as well as a long-term answer to the terrorist threat posed by “radical, anti-democratic, Islamist ideology,” said Fried, who heads the Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs.

“We do believe that democracy is applicable in the Middle East, just as it has been applicable in Asia, South America, Eastern Europe, and South Asia,” he said. “We intend to support democratic movements in that world, as well as in Central Asia and the post-communist hemisphere.”

The emphasis on democracy as a long-term solution to extremism and terrorism “is apt to be an enduring legacy of the Bush administration,” Fried said.

During the roundtable discussion, Fried answered questions about a wide range of issues, including democracy in Russia, the future status of Kosovo, the Annan plan for Cyprus, Turkey’s bid to join the European Union, the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh, energy security in Russia and Central Asia, democratic progress in Georgia and U.S.-European relations.

The State Department welcomed 129 journalists from around the world for the inaugural Edward R. Murrow Program for Journalists April 1-21. It is a component of the department’s International Visitor Leadership Program. (See announcement (<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2006/63799.htm>).)

Murrow, a leading broadcast journalist from 1935 to 1960, headed the United States Information Agency from 1961 to 1963.

Following is the full transcript of the roundtable discussion:

(begin transcript)

Daniel Fried
Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs
Roundtable Discussion with Murrow Journalist International Visitor Program

U.S. State Department
Washington, DC
2:30 p.m. April 4, 2006

Ambassador Fried: Well, given that this is, I’m told, Russian and Turkish speaking, [greeting in Russian]. [Laughter]. You’re very welcome here in the Department of State, and I’d like to talk a little bit about U.S. foreign policy in the second Bush term, and then stop fairly quickly and answer your questions, if that’s all right, if that’s a good way to proceed.

The Bush foreign policy has really evolved from the September 11th terrorist attack as an initial event and gone through several phases. In the initial aftermath of September 11th, we faced a national emergency. We were attacked essentially by the Taliban and al-Qaida from Afghanistan, and we took action there.

Iraq you know about and that has been discussed, and I don’t want to spend the whole time talking about Iraq, but we felt that one of the lessons of September 11th was that you could not wait for dangers to gather and do nothing. And that containment of someone like Saddam Hussein might not be a viable strategy, especially since containment wasn’t working.

But as time went on, you will notice if you study President Bush’s speeches carefully that in his foreign policy speeches and in the National Security Strategy documents of the United States he gradually emphasized issues other than the strict military and intelligence side of counterterrorism and started speaking about longer term issues of building democracies and reform and stability through reform. We stopped defining al-Qaida as an enemy in a narrow sense of being a terrorist organization and started speaking more about radical, anti-democratic, Islamist ideology as a longer term problem for which the

answer was not principally a military or intelligence answer, but was an answer rooted in reform, support for democracy, support for states, for nations seeking to deepen their own democracies.

This emphasis on democracy as a long-term answer to the problems of Islamist extremism and the terrorism derived from that extremism is apt to be an enduring legacy of the Bush administration - more than what is usually considered to be the Bush administration's foreign policy legacy, things like preemption. Preemptive military action: I think that is going to be less important, and the emphasis on democracy is more important.

Now, because there are a great many Turkish speakers here, it may have occurred to you listening to me that Turkey's experience of building a secular democracy within a society which is mostly Muslim, and then in recent years deepening that democracy may be very relevant. Indeed, we find that experience to be relevant because Turkey is at once a country with a Muslim population and a democracy, and a secular nation state.

Those achievements are very relevant to the kind of problems we face now, which is dealing with a radical Islamist ideology which denies in principle the relevance of democracy and denies that democracy can take root in a society which has Muslim traditions.

We reject the notion of a clash of civilizations, and we reject the notion that any one religion is intrinsically more disposed to democracy than any other religion.

Similarly, we believe that democratic reforms, the rule of law, and a kind of openness toward the world is a better answer to the problems left behind by the Soviet Union than nationalism or authoritarianism. There is a debate in Russia today whether democracy - well, there isn't even much of a debate. Many Russians believe that democracy equals chaos and that democracy as it was practiced in Russia in the '90s demonstrates that democracy is not terribly relevant to the problems of post-communism.

In our view this is mistaken, and the problem of reform in Russia in the '90s was not that it was too democratic, but that it was not consistent enough.

I see there is a journalist from Poland here. In the beginning of the 1990s Poles didn't know whether they would succeed. The economy in Poland was in complete ruin. The country was very poor. The infrastructure was wretched. The demographics were bad. Not as bad as they are in Russia today, but actually pretty bad. And the Poles' answer to that was not to turn away from reform and embrace authoritarianism, but to push ahead with reform, and they did so in the early '90s with great concentration, and the results later speak for themselves of massive economic growth, rising standard of living, and gradual stability on a much higher level of national existence, actually.

So the Bush administration looks at democracy not as is sometimes assumed in Europe as a kind of Messianic ideology that bears no relationship to reality, but as a rather practical solution to problems and a practical solution which has been successful in the past 17 years, since 1989, in cases where it has been applied consistently.

Now one of the challenges we Americans face is that for 60 years we did not really regard democracy as relevant to the broader Middle East or countries which were Muslim. During the 1970s we talked about democracies and human rights as the answer to communism, but we seemed very happy to deal with authoritarian regimes in Egypt and conservative, absolutist monarchies in Saudi Arabia.

The results in the Middle East were not terribly satisfactory, and what we have done in this administration is to do away with this red line around the broader Middle East which said within this red line democracy and the normal rules don't apply. They do apply.

The problem with this kind of an approach is that although democracy, I am convinced, will be the fate for the broader Middle East in the long run; in the short run life is not life the way the Soviet Union used to describe it - a triumphant march to a better future. It's pretty complicated stuff.

But we do believe that democracy is applicable in the Middle East, just as it has been applicable in Asia, South America, Eastern Europe, and South Asia.

We intend to support democratic movements in that world, as well as in Central Asia and the post-communist hemisphere.

Now those are very broad outlines of American foreign policy in the second Bush term. Tomorrow I'm giving testimony in the Senate about the problem and the causes of Islamist extremism, mostly in Western Europe. This is a long-term challenge for us. Many of the Islamist radicals and the intellectual climate they live in remind me as someone who lived in the Soviet Union, remind me of 21st Century versions of Raskolnikov, an uprooted semi-intellectual with great ideas who falls into rather dangerous radical nihilism.

This is a challenge we have to face, and we have to face this together working with the governments of the countries you represent and with civil societies in your countries.

Let me stop here. You come from a great many countries. Your questions are apt to be different. I will do my best to answer them, but I wanted to give you an overall framework of what our thinking is like.

So with that, I'm at your disposal.

Question: My name is Anna Novicka.... My name is Anna Novicka. I am from [the] Latvian newspaper Telegraf and I would like to find out about your opinion as the development in the relations in the triangle the United States, Russia and Europe is concerned if we take into account that the opinions of the United States and Russia are becoming more and more different. I mean the relationship with Syria, Ukraine, Belarus. Is there any future for relations in this triangle?

Ambassador Fried: Everybody got the question?

We want to work with Russia on a common agenda, and we want to work with Russia wherever possible. There are, objectively speaking, or there should be, objectively speaking, as used to be said in the old Soviet Union, no barriers to our cooperation because we are not each other's principal problem. In practice, that cooperation has been more difficult than we Americans had hoped.

You mentioned Belarus. Is there anybody here from Belarus?

I don't know why Russia has supported the recent elections in Belarus. No country in Europe believed these elections were free and fair. As far as I can tell no democracy anywhere in the world thought these elections were free and fair. I do not understand why Russia would find it in its interest to support the Lukashenko regime.

I think Russia is still trying to find its place in the world after the collapse of the Soviet Union, and I think back to the period, there was a period in history when Russia was the most advanced relative to Western Europe, the most successful, the most economically, culturally, scientifically dynamic, which was, of course, the generation before 1914 when Russia also thought of itself as a European country.

I think that the periods when Russia sought to be isolated from the world and separate and part of its own sitting in a kind of isolation were periods that did not bring Russia great results. Now this is not a US government view, this is only my view as someone who lived in Russia. But I hope that Russia will return to a path of convergence with and integration with the Euro-Atlantic community because Russia has a great deal to offer.

I also don't think much of the theory of some Russians that the United States is out to encircle Russia. Encircling Russia is not our objective. We have other problems in the world. Russia is not a problem for us.

We were interested - you're from Latvia, right? We were interested in seeing Latvia become a member of NATO and a member of the European Union not because we wanted to surround Russia, but because we wanted to complete a Europe whole, free and at peace.

A Latvia, a Poland, a Romania that are secure, prospering democracies are not threats to Russia. A Germany in NATO and the European Union, a Germany which is a democracy, is hardly a threat to Russia. There is no threat to Russia from the West. I believe there ought to be the basis for strategic cooperation between Russia and the United States. It's proving more frustrating now than we had hoped.

Question: My name is Kirill Krabu. I've got a question about Europe. As you know, Europe is growing up now and gets more and more powerful. Our currency rates now are higher than the dollar. For example, the Euro is higher than the dollar now.

How do you think about that, if this growth will continue? Is it a reason for the USA to be maybe afraid of Europe and to begin some polarization between Europe and USA? Because Europe is somewhere also now called as United States of Europe. So is it a reason to become polarized?

Ambassador Fried: No. We welcome a strong Europe. A strong Europe is good for the United States. The difficulties of the 20th Century - two world wars, the Cold War, Nazism, fascism, communism, were all products of a breakup, a kind of calamitous collapse of Europe in 1914.

Now why on earth would the United States, after having had to go to war twice in the 20th century to save Europe and fight the Cold War to defend democracy in Europe, be alarmed by the prospect of a secure, stable, prospering and democratic Europe today? It would be ridiculous. We want there to be a strong Europe.

There is not one serious person in Washington who worries about a U.S.-European rivalry. Commercially, yes. Okay, Boeing and Airbus will always fight. Of course they will. Well, so what? Ford and GM also fight. Let them. All right?

The strategic fact is the United States and Europe need to work together because the threats we face are common threats, and they mostly originate outside of Europe, both in the broader Middle East and the problems along what I call Europe's frontiers of freedom - the Balkans, South Caucasus. These are where the problems are. But the United States and Europe are together a center of democracy and prosperity in the world, and the alliance there is very close and apt to be closer.

When I think of all the problems, the last of my worries is a U.S.-European rivalry. Besides, the worst days of 2003, 2004, the debate about the Iraq war - that is behind us now, thank God.

Question: I am from Kosovo, Taner, the Balkans and anything about the Balkans. As you know the Kosovo problem and the challenge has not been solved yet and at the same time in Serbia there are sort of problems. So, the stability of the Balkans... and what is the American policy towards these two issues, especially the Kosovo status?

Ambassador Fried: The United States has been involved deeply in the Balkans since the breakup of the old Yugoslavia. Kosovo's status is the last open question, just as Serbia's future direction is the biggest problem.

We support the efforts of Ahtisaari, the former Finnish president, to negotiate arrangements for Kosovo's final status this year. I don't know what those arrangements will be, but I do know what they will not be. We will not go back to the situation before 1999. We will not partition Kosovo. We will not redraw borders. That is no secession, no greater this or greater that. And whatever solution there is in Kosovo has to respect the rights of Kosovo's minorities -- ethnic Serb, ethnic Turkish.

NATO didn't fight a war in Kosovo to support anyone's nationalist agenda. The Serb population of Kosovo needs to be protected, it needs to be respected, it needs to have a home in Kosovo. Not because Belgrade insists, but because this is a matter of principle to us.

Then the whole region needs to move to Europe. You cannot have the Balkans outside of Europe as a breeding ground of poverty, theft, smuggling, and occasionally wars. And I believe that Serbia ought to be in Europe. This isn't just about Kosovo, it's about the whole region. And Macedonia should be in Europe.

What I can't say is exactly what Kosovo's final status will be, but that's not up to the United States, that's a negotiated process.

Question: I am from North Cyprus. This is Basaran. Of course there is a... we have a Cyprus issue. In the Cyprus issue there has been a referendum as you know. The Turkish side said yes, and the Greek side said no, and because of that we could not reach to any peace. The Greek side of course established themselves as the member of European Union. So, there has been some commitments to diplomatic channels and economic commitments. Unfortunately, these commitments by United States have not been established. The... there was a meeting between our president and Condoleezza Rice but any committed promises were not established. So, if you can elaborate on this?

Ambassador Fried: I am very familiar with the Cyprus issue. We believe in one Cyprus. We support reunification of the island as a bizonal, bicommunal federation. We do not believe in separatism or cessation. We are very pleased that the Turkish Cypriot community also supports reunification.

I myself have met with Mr. Talat. We do not recognize him as president; we do not recognize the government, but we do understand that he is a leader of the Turkish Cypriot community, and we appreciate the fact that he supports a negotiated settlement to reunify the island. We encourage that. It's the right policy. We look forward to the day when a reunited Cyprus with a secure Turkish community is in the European Union as a whole island.

Now we understand that bizonal, bicommunal federation also means that there have to be certain arrangements. We supported the Annan plan, as you know. It didn't pass. I regret that. But we have to find a way to make progress. We do want to make progress on the basis that I stated. And we do want to encourage the Turkish Cypriot community, but without recognizing a separate state and without creeping recognition of a separate state because we do believe in unification. Again, this is what the Turkish Cypriot leadership says it believes, and I accept this. I believe their position is sincere.

So we look forward to working with the government of Cyprus, with the Turkish Cypriot community, with the United Nations, with Turkey, with Greece to advance a settlement which will help everyone.

Question: I come from Brussels, speaking English.

About the Cyprus issue, this year everyone is expecting a crisis for Turkey about the Greek Cypriots and opening the port issue. Turkey clearly declared that they won't open their ports unless there is a settlement in Cyprus. It will be a big crisis with, big or small I don't know, but definitely a crisis for Turkey in the EU relationship.

Also there is a ground shifting for the settlement from UN to EU, and it seems that U.S. doesn't respond at all. Since Mr. Annan has a very limited time and I don't think that personally he will again try something else because of every limitation. Do you have any concrete steps in the short term for Cyprus? Not recognition of course, but to try for anything.

Ambassador Fried: You make a very good point, which is that this issue, and I'm putting it in my words not yours, but that this issue will not get better by itself. In fact, we have been thinking about how important it is that we do whatever we can to help promote a settlement.

I frankly appreciate the Turkish government's support for a settlement. I don't think that Talat could have done what he did without Turkey's backing. This is a significant change. It means that Turkey also supports a bizonal, bicomunal federation.

So we have to look at what we can do to support a settlement. Now you're right, we have always supported Turkey's accession to the European Union on the basis that Turkey ought to be treated like every other candidate. Turkey meets the criteria, it should join. If it doesn't, it shouldn't. But no special rules.

This is a tough position for Turkey, I understand it. We want to make progress, and we were thinking about how to approach the Cyprus issue so as to avoid this kind of a problem. The Turkish government deserves credit for having supported a settlement. This is not trivial. This is a big deal. It means that Greece, Turkey, the Turkish Cypriot community, and the government of Cyprus all support a bizonal, bicomunal federation. They just argue about the ways to get there. I understand this. This is not easy. But we should not let this drift.

So that's the premise of your question, and I frankly agree with you, and we're thinking about this very actively right now.

Question: I am from Azerbaijan, from the TV Company INS. From the year 2005 until today everybody who's connected to the settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh issue, they've been talking that this conflict has to be solved in the year 2006. If it's not solved now then it will last for many years. But now we see that the talks are deadlocked and the non-constructive position of the Armenian president is indicative. How do you think, is it possible that this conflict is settled within one or two years? And please take into consideration that both parties have always claimed that they wouldn't seize any territory? How do you see it?

Ambassador Fried: Happily the situation is not as stuck as it appeared immediately after Rambouillet. At Rambouillet Presidents Kocharian and Aliyev met. They failed to come to agreement on terms to settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, and many people thought, oh my God, it's over, there will be war, terrible things will happen.

Shortly after that I went out to Baku and Yerevan with Ambassador Steve Mann, who is the American negotiator as part of the Minsk group process of negotiating a settlement of Nagorno-Karabakh. And we had a series of useful, I think productive, discussions with the government of Azerbaijan, the government of Armenia, and we have had discussions here with Foreign Minister Oskanian of Armenia and Deputy Foreign Minister Azimov of Azerbaijan. Both governments appear serious about making progress. Both governments gave us something to work with. So we're no longer quite stuck. We don't have a solution yet, but we are confident enough that we're proceeding with discussions with both governments, working with the Minsk group co-chairs.

It's important that both countries understand that they both cannot have their maximum objectives at the same time. Both countries can't achieve that. And, in fact, neither country will achieve its maximum objectives. Similarly, no country can receive anything. Both countries have interests that must be taken into account.

It's going to take courage and political leadership to get out of a war cycle and start contemplating the much more hopeful future if there is peace.

You're from Azerbaijan, right? Your country's going to have a lot of money coming in from oil and gas, but only if there is peace. If there is war, there is no more money. All right? Just look at the map. You know what I'm talking about. You're well set up for peace. Of course, the oil and gas money won't do you any good unless it's well spent, but that's a different issue. So we're determined to move ahead.

Question: This is Liudmila Barba from Moldova. About the Kosovo status, many official people from Moscow, including President Putin, have indicated that in case Kosovo is recognized then Russia would

be able to recognize the separatist regions in post-Soviet territory. Do you take into consideration this factor when you are thinking about the status of Kosovo?

The second question is about the widening of the European Union. After World War II, the United States supported the present European Union. Will the United States keep supporting the enlargement of the European Union to include Ukraine and Moldova?

Ambassador Fried: First, we do not regard Kosovo as a precedent for resolution of any other conflict. Not Transnistria, not Abkhazia, not South Ossetia, not Chechnya, or North Ossetia, or Ingushetia. It is not a precedent. Full stop.

We do not support separatism. We do not support separatist agendas.

Why is Kosovo different? Because Milosevic fought a war with NATO, for one thing, and he lost. Secondly, the United Nations has had administration over Kosovo for seven years. Third, the UN Security Council has repeatedly affirmed Kosovo's status as under UN administration, its final status to be worked out.

So our position is very clear and should not be misunderstood.

The second question about the enlargement of the European Union. We've always favored it. We think it has been a fabulous success. It has been a fabulous success. We believe that enlargement should continue, although we recognize first that there is a debate in Western Europe about EU enlargement that we have to respect. And second, the countries have to be ready. It is not a gift, it is not a charity program. Your Polish and Latvian colleagues here can tell you that it was very hard to get into the European Union. They had to do a lot, but it was worth it.

As for Ukraine, Ukrainians have to decide themselves. Anybody from Ukraine here? Yes. All right. Ukrainians have to decide for themselves what they want. Then they have to do the work.

Question: Thank you very much. Naziya Bissenova from Kazakshtan. Mr. Fried, actually I have several questions but to be fair I will ask only one question.

Presently, Russia is using its energy card when playing on the international arena and this question refers to the Central Asian countries and Kazakhstan.

Due to the position of the Russian monopoly Gazprom in the pipelines, they are in charge of everything. Europe and the United States are concerned about the situation that still the question of energy security hasn't been solved. How do you think, how soon will the alternative corridors be found?

Ambassador Fried: Well, that is one of the questions of the hour. The Russians have put energy security on the agenda of the G8. We believe that energy security comes from transparency and an open investment regime. It does not come from a closed regime or politicization or corruption.

Russia is going to make a lot of money off of energy under any scenario. That's not the issue. The issue is whether gas and oil will be developed according to commercial or strategic principles. We believe in commercial principles. We believe that an open investment regime will be better actually in the end for Russia. Certainly your country and Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan have a lot at stake here. So, in a way, does Ukraine.

We think that a closed system is not good, either for your country or for Georgia or for Ukraine or for Western Europe, and, frankly, I don't think it's good for Russia.

An open system will force governments - an open system will raise energy prices to world levels, which is not a bad thing, but you can't have energy prices at world levels for some countries and not for others.

And it's very odd that your country sells its base for \$40 a thousand cubic meters and that same gas is resold for \$240 a thousand cubic meters. I see you know exactly what I'm talking about.

The system needs to be open, and then Russia is going to make billions of dollars anyway, but it will do so under conditions which also benefit other countries.

Question: I have very short question, and I can hear from you very short answer. I am from Georgia, Ekaterine Kadagishvili. Everyone knows about the Rose revolution. More than two years have gone after this event. I am just interested if U.S. government sees any ... some... steps before, steps forward to democratic principles in this country or are some aspects where U.S. government maybe is disappointed.

Ambassador Fried: I do see progress. But, of course, in the end of 2004 Georgia was, well, the end of 2003, I guess. That's when we have to date it from, from the Rose Revolution. Georgia was in pretty bad shape, so I see progress from a pretty low base. There has been progress. This progress needs to be sustained for a long time. Civil society has to be strengthened, the economy has to develop, the state has to become functional, but not authoritarian. Georgia cannot afford military adventurism. I don't care how frustrating it is to have North/South Ossetia and Abkhazia in their current situation. There is no military answer. But I think there is progress.

You can tell me more, but I've been to Georgia three times in the past year, and each time it's a little better. The government's a little more organized, Tbilisi looks a little better, a few more roads have been developed.

Question: Is this enough?

Ambassador Fried: No, it's not enough. Of course it's not enough. But look, I'm not a Georgia expert but I know something - I'm old, right? So I've seen post-communist, I remember post-communist development in Eastern Europe in 1989. After two years in Poland, the country I know the best, it was still a mess, but there was some progress. Was it enough? No. But they made more progress, they didn't stop.

Question: All other countries it seems like make more progress.

Ambassador Fried: No, actually Georgia's done - Look, Georgia made no progress basically for 10 years after independence. It stopped a civil war, that's true, but that's all it did. Georgia has a lot more to do but it's done something.

Question: I'm Armine Amiryan, I'm from Armenia from Armenian TV. In terms of democracy and human rights protection, which countries within our region are more favorable conditions?

Ambassador Fried: Don't ask me to rank order countries. [Laughter]. Look, a lot of Armenians were disappointed that the constitutional referendum last fall was not as free and fair as it should have been. We have recently concluded with Armenia an agreement to provide \$250 million worth of assistance under the Millennium Challenge Account, but we have told Armenia very clearly that it has to deepen its democratic reforms as a condition of this program.

I think a settlement of Nagorno-Karabakh is critical for Armenia because the country needs to get beyond a mentality of encirclement in the war. The same could be said for Azerbaijan.

Democracy takes leadership from the top, it also takes leadership from civil society. And it is only - I don't know about the rest of the world from experience, but I know that in post-communist societies the only successful countries emerging from communism have been countries which have implemented free market and democratic reforms and done so on a sustained basis over time.

Other models have been tried - from nationalism and fascism in Serbia, to a "go slow" approach in Romania. Is anybody here from Romania? You remember President Iliescu's first term of office? Not

exactly a great success. But when he came back the second time after Constantinescu, things advanced and got better. No matter what your politics I think everybody agrees it was better in the late '90s. That's my point.

I really do have to go. Thank you.

(end transcript)

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*EUR511 04/07/2006

U.S. Welcomes Announcement on Northern Ireland Assembly
(Calls on parties to restore power-sharing government) (380)

Washington -- The United States welcomed the announcement April 6 by British Prime Minister Tony Blair and Irish Prime Minister Bertie Ahern on restoring the Northern Ireland Assembly established by the Good Friday Agreement.

"President Bush calls on all parties to demonstrate leadership and seize this opportunity to work together to restore the power-sharing Government and resolve outstanding issues," said a statement issued by the White House.

"In particular, we urge full support for civilian policing throughout Northern Ireland and an unequivocal commitment to the rule of law and the renunciation of all paramilitary and criminal activities," the statement said.

The Good Friday Agreement, which was signed on April 10, 1998, was a major step in the Northern Ireland peace process. It calls for Protestants to share political power with the minority Catholics and creation of an elected Northern Ireland Assembly and other institutions. It also contains provisions on disarmament, policing reform, human rights, prisoners and demilitarization by British armed forces.

Two of the core institutions established by the accord, the Northern Ireland Assembly and its Executive, were suspended in October 2002 due to disagreements about weapons decommissioning and concerns about activities of the Provisional Irish Republican Army (IRA).

Britain's Blair has set a deadline of November 24 for Northern Ireland's politicians to re-establish a power-sharing administration, according to news reports.

In July 2005, the IRA announced it would foreswear violence, and in the fall of that year it decommissioned a substantial portion of its weapons arsenal. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/eur/Archive/2005/Sep/26-546409.html>)).

Ambassador Mitchell B. Reiss, the special envoy of the president and the secretary of state for the Northern Ireland peace process, told Congress in March that these moves raised hopes that the Good Friday accord finally would be implemented fully. At that time, however, Reiss said the peace process was at an "impasse" which he hoped would be "short-lived." (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/eur/Archive/2006/Mar/16-987080.html>)).

The White House statement said the United States remains "steadfast in our support of the peace process and the efforts of the British and Irish Governments to achieve a lasting peace under the principles of the Good Friday Agreement."

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*EUR512 04/07/2006

Gen. Jones: Military Invests in Partner Nations' Contingency Capabilities
(General Jones says counterterror, maritime operations, peacekeeping top agenda) (700)
By Jacquelyn S. Porth
Washington File Staff Writer

Washington -- Defense Department and State Department officials are promoting the importance of training and equipping allied and friendly military services as part of the war against terrorism and as an effort to prevent conflict before it erupts.

Security assistance programs help create common economic and security interests, provide mechanisms to respond to potential health crises, help emerging democracies defend their territory and foster their ability to thwart terrorist intentions. Marine Corps General James Jones, commander of the U.S. forces in Europe and Africa, made this point during an April 7 appearance before the House Armed Services Committee, in which he also said that conflict prevention is far more cost effective than post-conflict intervention.

Investments in training and equipping military and police forces and developing interlocking relationships with like-minded nations "can yield significant long-term dividends," Jones said. "A critical component in fighting the global war on terrorism is putting together programs that build the capacity of foreign nations to conduct counter-terrorist operations and participate in or provide support to military and stability operations in which the U.S. is a participant," he said.

Jones said programs such as Foreign Military Sales, Foreign Military Financing, Peacekeeping Operations, International Military Education and Training, and Direct Commercial Sales "provide access and influence; help build professional, capable militaries in allied and friendly nations; and promote interoperability with U.S. forces."

GULF OF GUINEA STRATEGY

Jones cited two examples in which such funding can make a difference. He said additional money could be used to help African nations address security weakness in the Gulf of Guinea where piracy, theft and unsecured ports are a problem.

"Shipping ports, transit areas, harbors, oil production, and transshipment areas are largely uncontrolled and raise concerns about vulnerability to terrorist attack," Jones said in his prepared remarks. Helping establish a command-and-control system as part of the Gulf of Guinea Maritime Security Initiative will improve traffic monitoring along the 2,000 nautical miles of coastline and contribute to greater stability in adjacent nations, he said.

TRANS-SAHARA INITIATIVE

Jones also pointed to the need to promote cooperation and indigenous military capacity in the Magreb and the Sahel region. Small amounts of money are being used to counter expanding operations by Islamic terrorist organizations through the Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Initiative, he said.

"Left unattended, political instability in Africa could require reactive and repeated interventions at enormous costs, as in the case of Liberia," Jones said. The U.S. military is working with Algeria, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, Morocco, Niger, Senegal, and Nigeria to strengthen regional security, help those nations prepare to meet myriad contingencies and develop solid counterterror capabilities, he added.

GEORGIAN INITIATIVE REAPS BENEFITS

Under Secretary of Defense for Policy Eric Edelman told committee members that the war on terrorism cannot be won without the help of effective partners. The former U.S. ambassador to Turkey pointed to the benefits gained from training and equipping Georgian forces who went on to challenge terrorist networks in the Pankisi Gorge and then deployed to Iraq as part of "Operation Iraqi Freedom."

Assistant Secretary of State for Political-Military Affairs John Hillen, in separate testimony, said security assistance helps advance U.S. national security interests by supporting and rewarding key partners and also by "promoting key American values with respect to democracy, human rights and civilian rule of the military."

BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS

Committee Chairman Duncan Hunter echoed the importance of partnering by saying building a competent, professional force also requires a government standing behind it "that is not wracked with corruption ... that is capable of paying and taking care of its soldiers." Otherwise, he said, the soldiers will not be dependable in a crisis.

If U.S. forces are teaching and helping nations "develop militaries [and police] that act in support of human rights, [in] the defense of democratically elected institutions and have a willingness to work with us and seek out our leadership and ... assistance: these are good things," Jones concluded.

For additional information about U.S. policy, see International Security (<http://usinfo.state.gov/is/>).

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*EUR513 04/07/2006

U.S. Sees Provocations, Positive Developments in South Ossetia

(State's Scott welcomes Russia-Georgia pact on withdrawal of Russian forces) (770)

By Jeffrey Thomas

Washington File Staff Writer

Washington -- The United States is disturbed by ongoing provocations by South Ossetian authorities but pleased that the latest talks over the South Ossetia conflict have resulted in some positive developments, according to a U.S. diplomat.

The United States also welcomes the March 31 agreement between Russia and Georgia on the withdrawal of Russian forces from two military bases in Georgia, said Kyle Scott, charge d'affaires of the U.S. Mission to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), Europe's largest security and human rights body. He spoke during a meeting April 6 of the OSCE Permanent Council in Vienna, Austria.

The provocations of concern to the United States involve the presence of heavy military weapons and equipment within the so-called "zone of conflict" contrary to agreements that ended fighting in the 1990s, he said.

South Ossetia was an autonomous political subdivision of Georgia during the Soviet era, declaring independence within the Soviet Union in September 1990. Open warfare began in January 1991 and continued until June 1992. Georgia declared independence in April 1991 and later signed a cease-fire agreement with Russian and South Ossetian representatives, the 1992 Sochi Agreement, which established a cease-fire between the Georgian and South Ossetian forces and defined both a zone of conflict around the South Ossetian capital of Tskhinvali and a security corridor along the border of South

Ossetian territories. (See State Department fact sheet (<http://usinfo.state.gov/eur/Archive/2005/Sep/27-300606.html>) on South Ossetian conflict.)

At the OSCE, Scott said the South Ossetian authorities “are showing a patent disregard for the Sochi and other agreements, which clearly state that there must be no heavy equipment in the zone of conflict.”

He called on the South Ossetian authorities to “cease and desist” from actions that violate the Sochi and other agreements.

The Sochi Agreement also created a peacekeeping body under Russian command, the Joint Peacekeeping Forces group (JPKF), comprised of peacekeepers from Georgia, Russia and Russia's North Ossetian autonomous republic.

Scott criticized the tardy response of the JPKF to the latest provocation as “clearly unacceptable,” adding, “The JPKF response to the incident casts considerable doubt on the ability, or willingness, of that force to act responsibly and impartially.”

“These kinds of provocations must stop,” he said. “There can be no hope for a peaceful solution of the conflict with this kind of behavior.”

Scott said the United States was pleased with the “positive developments” in recent talks held in Vladikavkaz, North Ossetia, under the auspices of the Joint Control Commission (JCC), another entity created by the 1992 Sochi Agreement. The JCC is co-chaired by the Georgian, Russian Federation, North Ossetian and South Ossetian sides, with the OSCE participating as a monitor and facilitator.

He welcomed the decision to form a working group on the peaceful settlement of the conflict based on Georgia's peace plan and a subsequent initiative by South Ossetian President Eduard Kokoity.

In January 2005, Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili proposed an autonomous status within Georgia for South Ossetia, which borders on the Russian Republic of North Ossetia-Alania. Georgian Prime Minister Zurab Noghaideli presented a peace plan to the OSCE in October 2005. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/eur/Archive/2005/Oct/28-382210.html>).)

Scott also welcomed the decisions to examine joint policing opportunities, to task a committee with drafting a priority-ordered list of mutually agreed projects and to hold the next JCC by the end of April.

But he expressed regret that the JCC co-chairs could not agree on a common position on confidence-building measures, security guarantees, and demilitarization. Noting that Georgia has unilaterally announced it will start demilitarization measures, he urged the South Ossetian authorities to adopt “a similarly constructive approach.”

Scott said the March 31 agreement between Russia and Georgia on the withdrawal of Russian forces from two military bases is “welcome news” and “an important step” toward Russia's fulfillment of commitments it made at the 1999 Istanbul Summit.

The OSCE chairman-in-office, Belgian Foreign Minister Karel De Gucht, also welcomed the agreement between Russia and Georgia. “This agreement marks significant progress in the talks between the Russian Federation and Georgia, and is a way forward in the establishment of good neighborly relations between the two countries,” De Gucht said April 7.

Under the agreement, Russia pledges to complete its withdrawal from the military base in Akhalkalaki by 2007 and to close the military base in Batumi by 2008.

The full text (http://www.usosce.rpo.at/archive/2006/04/South_Ossetia_04_06_06.pdf) (PDF, 2 pages) of Scott's statement is available on the USOSCE Web site.

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*EUR514 04/07/2006

U.S. "Deeply Disappointed" in Postponement of Transnistria Talks
(Reiterates support for Moldova's sovereignty and territorial integrity) (410)

Washington -- The United States expressed deep concern April 6 following a breakdown in negotiations to end the conflict in the Transnistria region of Moldova and the indefinite postponement of the next round of the five-sided talks that had been scheduled for April 3-7.

Kyle Scott, chargé d'affaires for the U.S. Mission to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), said the United States hopes the "Tiraspol regime will reconsider the decision and return to the negotiating table to hold serious discussions" on several key issues. Tiraspol is the administrative center for Transnistrian separatists.

The unresolved issues highlighted by Scott include:

- Monitoring Transnistria's military-industrial enterprises;
- Implementing an international assessment to evaluate the possibility for free and fair, internationally monitored elections in the Transnistrian region; and
- Resolving the plight of farmers in Dorotscaia who have been denied access to their fields.

Scott said the United States also is concerned by news reports of a planned independence referendum in the Transnistria region, saying the United States will not recognize such a referendum. "We reiterate our support for Moldova's sovereignty and territorial integrity," he said. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/eur/Archive/2006/Mar/09-516866.html>).)

Talks concerning the status of Transnistria have been ongoing since 1992, although they broke down in mid-2004 when Russian and Ukrainian-speaking separatists forcibly closed a Moldovan language school in Transnistria, threatened five other schools with closure and then impeded international assistance to a local orphanage.

The United States participated as an observer in earlier rounds of negotiations and said those talks marked "a small step forward" toward a settlement. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=washfile-english&y=2005&m=November&x=200511041450281CJsamohT0.9135553&t=xarchives/xarchitem.html>).)

A narrow strip of Moldovan territory between the Dniester River and Moldova's eastern border with Ukraine, Transnistria declared independence in September 1991. Soon after, fighting broke out between the government forces and Transnistrians. The conflict was halted by Russian troops, which remain in the region despite Russian pledges at the 1999 OSCE Istanbul Summit to withdraw them. (See fact sheet (<http://usinfo.state.gov/eur/Archive/2005/Sep/27-7547.html>).)

"Regrettably, this process has not been completed," Scott said. "We again call on the Russian Federation to resume its withdrawal. This would be an important signal to the Transnistrian leadership that the status quo will not last forever."

The full text (http://www.usosce.gov/archive/2006/04/Moldova_04_06_06.pdf) (PDF, 2 pages) of the statement is available on the Web site of the U.S. Mission to the OSCE.

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*EUR515 04/07/2006

Text: Eurasian, European Scientists Help Counter Threat of Bioterrorism
(State Department sponsors nonproliferation BioIndustry Initiative) (520)

More than 50 leading scientists and biotechnology industry representatives from Russia, Ukraine, Kazakhstan, Georgia, Azerbaijan and Uzbekistan will participate in the Biotechnology Industry Organization's annual conference in Chicago April 9-12.

This is part of the BioIndustry Initiative (BII) that grew out of the 2001 commitment between President Bush and Russian President Vladimir Putin to pursue cooperation to counter the threat of bioterrorism.

The BII, a program of the State Department's Office of Cooperative Threat Reduction, helps support the transformation to civilian functions of former Soviet biological research and production capacities.

The BII is working with the International Science and Technology Center (ISTC) in Moscow and the Science and Technology Center of Ukraine (STCU) in Kiev to support the attendance of the Eurasian and European scientists at the conference, which is called BIO 2006. (See fact sheet (<http://usinfo.state.gov/eur/Archive/2004/Sep/27-700151.html>)).

Following is a State Department media note on BIO 2006:

(begin text)

U.S. Department of State
Office of the Spokesman
April 6, 2006

MEDIA NOTE

BIO 2006: EURASIAN AND EUROPEAN SCIENTISTS DEVELOP NOVEL TECHNOLOGIES TO COMBAT DISEASE AND BIOTERRORISM THROUGH THE BIOINDUSTRY INITIATIVE

The U.S. Department of State is sponsoring more than 50 leading scientists and biotechnology industry representatives from Russia, Ukraine, Kazakhstan, Georgia, Azerbaijan and Uzbekistan to participate in the Biotechnology Industry Organization's annual conference, BIO 2006, in Chicago, April 9-12.

The BioIndustry Initiative (BII) of the Office of Cooperative Threat Reduction of the U.S. Department of State is working with the International Science and Technology Center (ISTC) in Moscow and the Science and Technology Center of Ukraine (STCU) in Kiev to support the Eurasian and European scientists.

The mission of the BII is to counter the threat of bioterrorism through targeted transformation to civilian functions of former Soviet biological research and production capacities. BII collaborators include the ISTC, STCU, Russian Bioconsortium, TEMPO - Center of Modern Medical Technology, and other implementation partners.

Deputy Assistant Secretary, Andrew Semmel, Bureau of International Security and Nonproliferation, described the participation of the BII delegation in BIO 2006 as "a significant event for the State Department's Cooperative Threat Reduction programs and a model activity for the BII. As part of a long-term sustainability plan, BII helps to open the door for international business collaboration to researchers and institutes in the former Soviet Union. We feel confident that programs such as BII will not only reduce

the threat of bioweapons proliferation but will also increase collaborative activities in areas such as drug and vaccine development."

Veteran scientists from some of the top-notch research and production facilities of the former Soviet Union will present their latest technologies, ranging from novel vaccines, drugs and diagnostics to opportunities in contract research and industrial-scale manufacturing available in this emerging biotechnology sector.

For further information, please contact: Kendra A. Bodnar, Ph.D., Deputy Director, BII, International Security and Nonproliferation - Office of Cooperative Threat Reduction (ISN/CTR), U.S. Department of State, Tel: 202-647-6294, Fax: 202-736-7698, E-mail: BodnarKA@state.gov

BII Web site: <http://www.biistate.net/docs/bio2006.php>; E-mail: EurasiaBio2006@biistate.net (<mailto:EurasiaBio2006@biistate.net>)

(end text)

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*EUR516 04/07/2006

Rademaker: International Cooperation Key to Stopping WMD Threats
(Official outlines strategy against nuclear, chemical and biological weapons) (450)

Washington -- Security cooperation is essential to reinforce international efforts to combat the risk of terrorist use of weapons of mass destruction (WMD), says Stephen Rademaker, acting assistant secretary of state for international security and nonproliferation.

"If terrorists acquire weapons of mass destruction, we have to assume they will employ them, with potentially catastrophic effects," Rademaker said in an April 6 speech to the Security Cooperation Strategy Conference hosted by the National Defense University.

Rademaker said the president's 2006 national security strategy emphasizes the U.S. commitment to working with its friends and allies to build a layered defense against WMD based on three pillars:

- Counterproliferation to combat WMD Use;
- Strengthened nonproliferation to combat WMD proliferation; and
- Consequence management to respond to WMD use.

To integrate these strategic elements, Rademaker said that the United States is working to:

- Collect and analyze intelligence concerning WMD threats;
- Pursue research and development to improve response to WMD threats;
- Build international cooperation through bilateral and multilateral diplomacy; and
- Develop targeted strategies, as needed, against hostile states and terrorists.

Rademaker stressed the need for close interagency coordination to ensure a successful layered defense against WMD, and highlighted the close working relationship that exists between the Departments of State and Defense.

Rademaker observed that State's transformational diplomacy initiative and the Defense Department's Quadrennial Defense Review work together to focus on counterproliferation as well as on building "dynamic foreign partnerships" that strengthen their ability to work together and alone. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/gi/Archive/2006/Feb/15-861225.html>).)

Rademaker discussed several successful counterproliferation initiatives, including:

- Nunn-Lugar and related programs to destroy dangerous weapons and prevent their proliferation;
- The G8 Global Partnership Against the Spread of Weapons and Materials of Mass Destruction;
- The Global Threat Reduction Initiative to reduce fissile and radioactive material worldwide;
- The Second Line of Defense and Megaports programs to install radiation-detection capability at major seaports, airports and border crossings;
- Efforts by the United States to encourage the U.N. Security Council to become more active in combating WMD proliferation; and
- The Proliferation Security Initiative, a 70-nation security cooperation partnership to deter, disrupt, and prevent the transfer of WMD to terrorists or states of proliferation concern.

“The threat of nuclear terrorism is one of the most dangerous international security challenges we face today,” Rademaker said. “In recognition of the seriousness of this threat, we are always looking for new ways to work with other willing partner nations.”

The full text (<http://www.state.gov/t/isn/rls/rm/64173.htm>) of Rademaker's remarks is available on the State Department Web site.

For further information, see Arms Control and Non-Proliferation (http://usinfo.state.gov/is/international_security/arms_control.html).

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*EUR517 04/07/2006

Nuclear Security Official Outlines Future U.S. Weapons Plans
(NNSA planning for a smaller, more secure and reliable nuclear stockpile) (270)

Washington — America's nuclear security agency is planning for a significantly smaller and more efficient nuclear weapons stockpile by 2030, an Energy Department official says.

In testimony to the House Armed Services Committee Subcommittee on Strategic Forces April 5, Tom D'Agostino, deputy administrator for defense programs at the Energy Department's National Nuclear Security Administration, said he envisioned “a smaller, safer, more secure stockpile, with assured reliability over the long term.” Such a stockpile would need to be supported by an industrial and design capability that could respond to changes in technical, geopolitical or military needs, he added.

“It offers the best hope of achieving the president's vision of the smallest stockpile consistent with our national security needs,” D'Agostino told the members of Congress. In 2004, President Bush called for reductions in the nuclear weapons stockpile of almost 50 percent by 2012.

D'Agostino highlighted five main elements of the NNSA plan:

- Developing a replacement warhead built for long-term reliability and safety to minimize the possible need for underground testing;
- Speeding up the dismantlement of warheads retired from the stockpile;
- Consolidating special nuclear weapons materials into fewer sites to increase security and reduce costs;
- Establishing a consolidated plutonium center for research, development, production and surveillance operations instead of constructing another pit facility; and

- Increasing efficiency by making technical and business practices more uniform and using more effective risk management.

The full text ([http://www.nnsa.doe.gov/docs/congressional/2006/2006-04-05_HASC_Transformation_Hearing_Statement_\(D'Agostino\).pdf](http://www.nnsa.doe.gov/docs/congressional/2006/2006-04-05_HASC_Transformation_Hearing_Statement_(D'Agostino).pdf)) (PDF, 13 pages) of D'Agostino's prepared testimony is available on the NNSA Web site.

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*EUR518 04/07/2006

Text: Greater Progress Needed To Implement U.N. Reforms, Says Official
(United States wants resources reallocated, obsolete mandates eliminated) (2430)

Although the United States acknowledges recent progress by the United Nations in implementing much needed management reforms, a top State Department official says it still has a very long way to go.

Kristen Silverberg, assistant secretary of state for international organization affairs, told members of Congress that the United States could not join the U.N. consensus on a recent resolution to establish a Human Rights Council -- replacing the discredited Human Rights Commission -- because of its shortcomings. "We will continue to press for a Human Rights Council with strong membership that can truly act to address the world's most pressing human rights problems," she said during testimony April 6 before a House Appropriations subcommittee.

She also said the United States intends to ensure the United Nations eliminates continued funding of mandates that have become obsolete, changes those that have proven ineffective and reallocates its resources to meet priority objectives. Efforts are under way, she said, to ensure that decisions on U.N. mandates are reflected in the 2006-2007 budget.

Silverberg said that another issue on the reform agenda is the need for strengthened oversight. This means the Office of Internal Oversight Services needs adequate resources and sufficient independence to carry out its mission, she said.

The assistant secretary also expressed great concern about sexual exploitation and abuse by U.N. peacekeepers. Although the U.N. has made some progress in this area, she said that much remains to be done. The United States will insist that the international organizations and nations contributing peacekeeping troops deal with this subject, she said, "with the seriousness it deserves."

The assistant secretary said a strong and effective United Nations has a critical role to play in places such as Burma, Iran, North Korea and Sudan where it can "promote democratic reform, protect human rights and address threats to peace and security."

Silverberg also said African Union talks in Nigeria about the situation in Darfur have made some progress. She said U.S. military planners have been lent to the United Nations to work on military options to help stabilize the situation there.

Silverberg's testimony also highlighted recent successes at the United Nations including the establishment of the Peacebuilding Commission in December 2005 and the U.N. Democracy Fund in August 2005. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/is/Archive/2005/Dec/21-694826.html>).)

For information about U.S. policies and activities at the United Nations, see the United States and U.N. Reform (http://usinfo.state.gov/is/international_security/UNGA_2005.html).

A transcript of Silverberg's statement follows:

(begin text)

U.S. Department of State

Kristen Silverberg, Assistant Secretary for International Organization Affairs

Statement before the House Appropriations Committee, Subcommittee on Science, State, Justice and Commerce

Washington, DC

April 5, 2006

Statement on the President's Fiscal Year 2007 Budget for International Organizations and Peacekeeping

Thank you, Chairman Wolf, Ranking Member Mollohan, and Members of the Subcommittee, for inviting me here to discuss the President's Fiscal Year 2007 budget for international organizations and peacekeeping. I am grateful to have with me today my colleague at the United Nations in New York, Ambassador Bolton.

I ask that my full statement be submitted for the record.

Mr. Chairman, the President has requested \$1.269 billion to fund the CIO account, and \$1.135 billion for the peacekeeping account. This request will allow the United States to pay U.S. assessed contributions to the UN and 44 other international organizations, and to pay its share of UN peacekeeping assessments. This request recognizes the importance of our work in the United Nations and other international organizations in pursuing America's interests, spreading freedom and prosperity, and strengthening our security. The request represents increases of \$117 million for CIO and \$113 million for CIPA over the appropriated Fiscal Year 2006 amounts.

In his second Inaugural Address, President Bush committed the United States to work "to seek and support the growth of democratic movements and institutions in every nation and culture with the ultimate goal of ending tyranny in our world." We cannot achieve this mission with the tools of traditional diplomacy alone.

As Secretary Rice has argued, today the greatest threats emerge within states as well as between them. We need to approach diplomacy in a new way. The objective of "transformational diplomacy," as the Secretary calls it, must be "to work with our partners around the world, to build and sustain democratic, well-governed states that will respond to the needs of their people and conduct themselves responsibly in the international system."

The United Nations has a critical role to play in this effort. In countries such as Burma or Sudan, Iran or North Korea, we believe in a strong and effective UN, able to promote democratic reform, protect human rights, and address threats to peace and security.

To rise to these challenges, the UN must take action to aggressively address serious deficiencies in the organization. As the Gingrich-Mitchell Task Force, which this subcommittee commissioned, stated: "Until and unless it changes dramatically, the United Nations will remain an uncertain instrument, both for the governments that comprise it and for those who look to it for salvation." I would like to thank you, Mr. Chairman, for your strong commitment to UN reform and for initiating the Task Force, which has been a great aid to us in pursuing needed reforms.

In September 2005 heads of state and government from around the world met in New York to commemorate the 60th anniversary of the founding of the United Nations, and to recommit themselves to the purposes and principles of the UN Charter. The World Summit culminated in adoption by consensus of the World Summit Outcome Document, in which heads of state agreed to establish a Peacebuilding Commission, to replace the Commission on Human Rights with a new Human Rights Council, and to reform the management of the United Nations to make it more effective, efficient and accountable.

Mr. Chairman, six months after the World Summit, I must report that, although we have made some progress, we still have a long way to go before the United Nations meets the vision articulated by the President in September. Let me start with the progress.

One U.S. priority for UN reform was establishment of a Peacebuilding Commission that would bring a more coordinated and integrated approach to post-conflict situations. The Peacebuilding Commission was established by concurrent Security Council and General Assembly resolutions in December. The Commission will fill an important gap in the UN system, marshalling the resources of the international community to support integrated strategies for post-conflict recovery, focusing on reconstruction and institution-building to lay the foundation for sustainable development.

Another U.S. priority for UN reform was establishment of a UN Democracy Fund, an initiative of the President's that would provide assistance to new and emerging democracies. The Secretary-General officially established the Democracy Fund in August, and within months the fund had received pledges totaling \$43 million, with an additional \$7.92 million the Congress appropriated for FY06. The fund will add value to the UN's programs on electoral assistance and good governance by assisting civil society in countries on the road to democracy.

On the management front, the United Nations has implemented some of the much-needed management reforms. It established an Ethics Office at the beginning of this year, with an American serving as interim head. It also enacted new whistleblower protections and financial disclosure policies, which will be overseen by the Ethics Office.

United Nations action on other priorities has not been as swift or strong. As many of you know, the United States recently voted against the resolution establishing a new Human Rights Council. We had great hopes for a strong Human Rights Council. UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan had said that the old Human Rights Commission "casts a shadow on the reputation of the United Nations system as a whole." The Secretary-General made several sound proposals for a new Human Rights Council, including addressing the problem of membership by requiring the new Council to elect its members by a two-thirds majority. We agreed that the body's membership was the key to its credibility, adding our own proposal that countries under Security Council sanctions related to human rights abuses or acts of terrorism be automatically excluded from eligibility for membership.

In spite of a vigorous effort by Ambassador Bolton and his team in New York; robust outreach by the Secretary, Under Secretary Burns, and others; and energetic diplomacy by my bureau, the final text establishing the Human Rights Council contained neither of these provisions. Instead, it simply calls on member states to "take into account" a candidate's human rights record when voting. It also makes it more difficult to suspend an elected member - which requires a two-thirds vote - than to elect a new member.

There were some positive elements of the resolution, however, faced with the prospect of joining in the creation of a Human Rights Council lacking stronger mechanisms for maintaining credible membership, the United States could not join consensus on the resolution, and instead voted against it. In spite of that, we have committed to work cooperatively with other Member States to make the Council as effective as it can be.

Mr. Chairman, let me be clear: we do not consider this element of reform to have been fully achieved -- we will continue to press for a Human Rights Council with strong membership that can truly act to address the world's most pressing human rights problems.

On management reform, we also have a very long way to go. The Secretary-General himself has said that what is needed "is a radical overhaul of the entire Secretariat -- its rules, its structure, its systems -- to bring it more in line with today's realities." He has put forward several proposals, most recently in a report titled "Investing in the United Nations." We are in the process of reviewing these recommendations. The Gingrich-Mitchell report and the Hyde UN Reform bill also lay out a number of excellent

recommendations for strengthening management and oversight, and these have helped shape our effort during the last year.

One of the most important areas of management reform is mandate review, an evaluation of all older UN directives to assess whether they still serve a useful purpose or should be modified or eliminated. The Secretary-General released his report on mandate review on March 30, and we are reviewing it closely. We view this process as an important opportunity to address some of the waste and redundancy that exists throughout the UN system. The United States will seek to ensure that the UN eliminates mandates that have become obsolete, change those which have proven ineffective, and reallocate resources toward priority objectives. We will work to see that decisions on mandates are reflected in the 2006-2007 program budget and that a regular process for meaningful, ongoing review of UN activities is established.

We also seek reforms to strengthen oversight, such as ensuring adequate resources and independence for the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS). The OIOS has been central in exposing some of the recent problems in the UN, and we believe that a stronger, more independent OIOS can serve more effectively as a catalyst for change. We are also pushing the UN to operationalize an independent audit advisory body to check the quality of UN oversight bodies' work and recommend appropriate levels of resources for them, an idea on which the Gingrich-Mitchell Task Force contributed importantly to our thinking.

Finally, although the UN has made some progress in dealing with sexual exploitation and abuse by UN peacekeepers, much remains to be done. The UN is implementing a strategy adopted in April 2005 that focuses on prevention, enforcement of a zero tolerance policy, and assistance to victims. It has implemented a uniform standard of conduct and produced training modules for all peacekeeping personnel, and pressed the issue of sexual abuse with the leadership of all UN missions, both civilian and military. We remain deeply concerned about the problem, and will insist the UN and troop contributing countries treat this issue with the seriousness it deserves. We will not stand by while personnel assigned to relieve human suffering contribute to that suffering.

It is also a high priority to ensure greater United States representation on the staff and secretariats of international organizations. We have had a few successes in the last year, including placement of Chris Burnham as UN Under Secretary-General for Management, Larry Johnson as Assistant Secretary General for Legal Affairs, Ann Veneman as Executive Director of UNICEF, and Dr. Howard Zucker as Assistant Director-General at the World Health Organization.

We are not satisfied with the current level of American citizen employment in the UN and are bolstering resources to address this situation. We have an interagency task force to identify candidates for positions, have a senior advisor focused on senior level positions, and are broadening our outreach via the Internet and career fairs.

In closing, let me say a few words about the situation in Darfur, which is one of my highest priorities for the IO Bureau. We are working with our partners in the Security Council and the major contributors to the African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS) to expand the UN Mission in Sudan to include Darfur, incorporating the forces already there under the auspices of AMIS. This "rehatting" would build on the work performed by AMIS, and make way for a new UN operation with greater troop levels and capabilities. To this end, on March 24 the Security Council adopted Resolution 1663, requesting the Secretary-General to present plans for a UN Darfur mission by April 24. The United States is also providing military planners to assist the UN in developing military options to stabilize Darfur.

In the meantime, the AU-mediated talks on Darfur continue in Abuja, Nigeria, and some progress is being made. The Deputy Secretary has made four visits to Sudan in the past year, and in March he led the U.S. delegation to the Paris donor consortium on Sudan to press the two sides to reach an agreement. With others in the Administration, Deputy Secretary [Robert] Zoellick is pursuing a comprehensive approach to mitigate and end the unconscionable suffering in Darfur.

I look forward to working with this subcommittee and with Congress to ensure that our funding to the United Nations and other international organizations is an effective use of our taxpayer resources. Thank you.

Released on April 5, 2006

(end text)

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*EUR519 04/07/2006

U.S. Cuts Funds to Palestinian Authority, Raises Humanitarian Aid
(Rice says Hamas-led government failed to meet international demands) (510)
By David Shelby
Washington File Staff Writer

Washington – The United States announced April 7 that it would cut off all financial assistance to the Hamas-led Palestinian government in the absence of any indication that Hamas is prepared to renounce violence, respect Israel's right to exist and pursue good faith negotiations toward implementation of the road map peace process.

At the same time, the United States said it would increase humanitarian aid to the Palestinian people, channeling funds through the U. N. Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs).

"Because the new Hamas-led Palestinian government has failed to accept the Quartet principles of non-violence, recognition of Israel and respect for previous agreements between the parties, the United States is suspending assistance to the Palestinian government's cabinet and ministries," Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said in an April 7 statement.

The Quartet, which includes the European Union, Russia, the United Nations and the United States, issued a statement shortly after Hamas' electoral victory outlining the conditions under which the international community would engage with a Hamas-led government.

Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs David Welch told reporters in Washington, "Regrettably so far, the new Hamas government has not answered on any of those principles with anything that could approximate a 'yes.'"

"Absent a commitment by the Hamas government to these preconditions, we cannot see them as a partner for peace," he added.

Welch reaffirmed the U.S. unwillingness to engage in contacts with Hamas, which the United States considers a terrorist organization, but he said Washington would remain in contact with Palestinian President Mahmud Abbas, who has denounced violence and voiced his support for a negotiated peace settlement with Israel.

According to a State Department fact sheet, the United States will suspend more than \$400 million in assistance to the Palestinian Authority. This funding had been earmarked for infrastructure projects, enterprise development, governmental capacity building and community policing, among other things.

Rice said, however, "It is also our desire to help provide for the basic human needs of the Palestinian people."

Consequently, the United States will provide \$245 million to UNRWA and NGOs to support food programs, health care, avian influenza prevention, education and democratic organizations.

Welch said the funding for democracy programs was aimed at providing hope to the 55 percent of Palestinian voters who did not cast ballots for Hamas in the January legislative elections that propelled that group to power.

He said that UNRWA is an excellent vehicle for channeling assistance directly to the Palestinian people because of its presence on the ground in the Palestinian territories and in refugee camps in surrounding countries and because of its record of accountability.

A fact sheet (<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2006/64234.htm>) outlining changes in U.S. assistance to the Palestinians is available at the State Department Web site.

Rice's statement (<http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2006/64237.htm>) is available on the State Department Web site.

For information on U.S. policy, see The Middle East: A Vision for the Future (http://usinfo.state.gov/mena/middle_east_north_africa/me_vision.html).

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*EUR520 04/07/2006

Bush Nominates John Cloud as Ambassador to Lithuania
(Cloud is deputy chief of mission in Berlin) (130)

Washington -- President Bush has nominated John A. Cloud Jr. to serve as U.S. ambassador to Lithuania, according to an April 6 White House announcement.

Cloud, a career member of the senior Foreign Service, is the current deputy chief of mission in Berlin. He also has served as the deputy chief of mission to Poland and also to the European Union. In 2001, President Bush appointed Cloud as senior director for international economics at the National Security Council.

Cloud earned his bachelor of arts degree from the University of Connecticut in 1975, and his master's in international affairs from George Washington University in 1977.

His nomination was sent to the Senate on April 6 and is awaiting confirmation.

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*EUR521 04/07/2006

White House Report, April 6: Iran, Nominations
(McClellan calls on Iran to "come clean," comply with international obligations) (440)

WHITE HOUSE SAYS IRAN NEEDS TO COMPLY WITH U.N. WITHIN 30 DAYS

Iran needs to build confidence with the international community to show that it is not developing nuclear weapons under the cover of a civilian nuclear program, White House press secretary Scott McClellan said.

Speaking aboard Air Force One April 6 en route to Charlotte, North Carolina, McClellan said the Iranian government "is only further isolating itself and the Iranian people from the rest of the world" with its behavior.

"It's time for the regime to come clean and commit to complying with its international obligations. The Security Council passed a very clear and united statement just last week, and the regime has 30 days to make that commitment to come clean and comply, or we're going to be back at the Security Council talking about next steps to take," he said.

The press secretary said that because Iran hid its nuclear activities from the international community for the past two decades, "the international community is united in its concern when it comes to the regime."

BUSH NOMINATES AMBASSADORS TO SOUTH AFRICA, SURINAME, GUYANA, ARGENTINA

President Bush has nominated new U.S. ambassadors to South Africa, Suriname, Guyana and Argentina. The nominations have been sent to the U.S. Senate for approval.

According to an April 4 personnel announcement released by the White House, the president nominated current Assistant Secretary of State for Economic and Business Affairs E. Anthony Wayne to be the ambassador to Argentina. Wayne also has served as principal deputy assistant secretary in the European Affairs Bureau and was the deputy chief of mission at the U.S. Mission to the European Union.

Bush nominated Eric M. Bost as ambassador to South Africa. Bost currently is serving at the U.S. Department of Agriculture as the under secretary for food, nutrition and consumer services. Previously, he was the commissioner of the Texas Department of Human Services.

The president nominated Lisa Bobbie Schreiber Hughes as ambassador to Suriname. Hughes currently serves at the State Department's Western Hemisphere Affairs Bureau as senior adviser for regionalization and rightsizing. She previously was director of the Office of Andean Affairs, and served as deputy chief of mission in Paramaribo, Suriname.

Bush also nominated David M. Robinson as ambassador to Guyana. Robinson is currently the deputy chief of mission in La Paz, Bolivia, and previously was the deputy chief of mission in Asuncion, Paraguay. He was also a foreign affairs adviser to Senator Joseph Lieberman (Democrat from Connecticut).

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*EUR522 04/07/2006

U.S. Drug Czar Praises Dutch Disruption of Global Ecstasy Market
(Urges NATO group to strengthen support for Afghanistan antidrug efforts) (440)

Washington -- John Walters, director of the U.S. Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP), has urged NATO's North Atlantic Council participating in the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) to play a larger role in efforts to shore up institutional stability in Afghanistan and discussed with Dutch officials their recent success in disrupting the global market for the drug Ecstasy.

Walters returned April 5 from a weeklong trip to Afghanistan, Belgium and the Netherlands, where he addressed drug-related issues relevant to the United States, Europe and Southeast Asia.

Five years ago, the Dutch government released a five-year Ecstasy strategy against synthetic drug production, trade and consumption -- particularly Ecstasy, or MDMA (3,4-methylenedioxymethamphetamine), ONDCP said in a press release.

At its peak in 2001, total domestic U.S. seizures of Ecstasy reached 11 million tablets. But over the past two years, total U.S. seizures declined to less than 3 million tablets, and seizures of MDMA tablets shipped from abroad dropped from about 7 million in 2001 to less than 1.5 million in 2003 and 2004.

Ecstasy use among U.S. youths has decreased by two-thirds since 2002, ONDCP said.

"Thanks to the leadership of Justice Minister [Piet Hein] Donner and other Dutch officials," Walters said, "law enforcement authorities in the Netherlands have expanded customs efforts, increased their capacity to dismantle laboratories, and intensified controls on precursor chemicals."

Dutch officials have prosecuted key cases, dismantling the leadership structure of major Ecstasy production and trafficking organizations and disrupting the global Ecstasy market, he added.

Walters also repeated the U.S. commitment to the bilateral statement he and the Dutch health minister signed in July 2005 to expand Dutch-U.S. cooperation in demand reduction and scientific research.

He praised Health Minister Hans Hoogervorst and Donner for working to reduce marijuana drug tourism to the Netherlands and educate young people about the health consequences of cannabis use.

In Belgium, Walters told NATO's North Atlantic Council that Afghanistan's narcotics trade threatens its long-term stability and security in Europe and around the world, and poses a threat to U.S. policy and strategic interests in the country and the region.

"While eradication and interdiction of drug producers and traffickers is primarily a law enforcement role for Afghan forces," Walters said, "the International Security Assistance Force can play a valuable support role centered on security and logistics."

The full text (<http://www.whitehousedrugpolicy.gov/news/press06/040506.html>) of the ONDCP press release is available at the White House Drug Policy Web site.

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*EUR523 04/07/2006

U.N. Agency Highlights Economic Integration Need in Central Asia

(U.S. Agency for International Development aids Central Asian integration) (900)

By Afzal Khan

Washington File Special Correspondent

Washington -- Regional economic integration is the key to human development in the five Central Asian republics of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, according to the United Nations Development Program (UNDP).

UNDP Administrator Kemal Dervis said that integration of the economies of the five Central Asian republics is an uphill task.

Dervis addressed a conference on the U.N. 2005 Central Asia human development report at the Brookings Institution in Washington March 27 that featured panels with U.S. government officials, Central Asian diplomats, multilateral bank representatives and academics.

Dervis said that before gaining their independence from the former Soviet Union in 1991, the Central Asian countries were totally dependent on the Soviet economy. When independence came, he said, all “suffered a contraction of their economies” ranging from 70 percent for Tajikistan to 30 percent for Kazakhstan, with only Uzbekistan losing marginally. The UNDP issued its Central Asia human development report in December 2005. It examined the challenges the region faces and offered suggestions for how to deal with them.

Dervis, who wrote the foreword to the report, said that Central Asia’s bid to become linked to the world economy is complicated because of the different needs of each country. He said that a general development policy framework for the region will not work.

“A cookie-cutter approach won’t work, only a specific country focus will succeed in reforming the region,” he said.

Asian Development Bank (ADB) Vice President Liqun Jin told the conference the Central Asian republics recently have registered a 10 percent average overall gross domestic product (GPD) growth, with Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan on the high end of the scale. He said the formation of the Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation (CAREC) program in 1997 has provided benefits to the region by opening transport corridors to South Asia.

The CAREC program also includes Afghanistan, Mongolia and the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region of China, facilitating contacts of the Central Asian republics with their neighbors. However, Turkmenistan is not a member, and Russia is considering an invitation to participate.

The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the Islamic Development Bank and the UNDP, in addition to the ADB, support CAREC.

Jin said the combined assistance of the multilateral institutions to the Central Asian republics in the areas of transport, energy and trade is expected to exceed \$1.5 billion during 2006-2007.

One of the principal concerns raised in the UNDP report involves “border barriers” such as uneven custom duties and high transport costs that hinder the movement of goods among the five countries.

The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) has programs to facilitate trade between the five countries through customs and financial sector reforms.

USAID’s acting Assistant Administrator for Europe and Eurasia Drew W. Luten III said accountants are being trained and the groundwork is being laid for “a new regional business environment” in Central Asia.

WORKER MIGRATION, ENERGY RESOURCES, WATER MANAGEMENT

Another important challenge raised in the report deals with the migration of workers from the poorer countries to those that relatively are richer. Roughly 2 million laborers and small goods traders from Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan earn their living in Russia and Kazakhstan. The remittances of these migrant workers and traders form an important segment of the underground economy in Central Asia, according to the report. However, many of these migrant workers are undocumented and have to bribe their way across borders.

Cassandra Cavanaugh, Open Society Institute’s regional director for Central Eurasia/Caucasus, urged the Central Asian governments to issue proper travel documentation to the migrants so that they could travel legally to other countries in search of work.

The report recognized that the vast energy resources of the region -- hydrocarbon and hydroelectric -- have the potential to be engines of growth, but said that those resources must be used more efficiently and shared more equitably.

The transit route for oil and gas exports from the region still is monopolized by Russia and alternative routes through Afghanistan, China and Iran have yet to be developed.

The report said the core of the region's natural resource challenge is in better management of its water resources. The mountainous countries of Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, which control the upstreams of Central Asia's two main rivers, the Amu Darya and the Syr Darya, have multiple disagreements with the downstream countries, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, over issues such as payment for use of the water resources and the maintenance of dams and reservoirs.

The Aral Sea, the largest body of water in Central Asia, has shrunk drastically because of diversion of water from the rivers that feed into it. The report estimates that Central Asia is losing around \$1.7 billion every year -- or 3 percent of its GDP -- from poor water management that lowers agricultural yields.

Martha Brill Olcott of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace said it is important for the international community to support Central Asia's development, but external support cannot extend beyond the limits set by the individual republics. She said that projects that demand regional coordination cannot be implemented until the leaders of the individual republics are convinced of their value.

The UNDP report (http://hdr.undp.org/reports/detail_reports.cfm?view=924) is available in English (PDF, 268 pages) and Russian (PDF, 300 pages) on a U.N. Web site.

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*EUR524 04/07/2006

U.S. Animal ID System To Be Ready by 2007, USDA Official Says
(Major changes ahead for livestock industry, Agriculture's Johanns says) (520)
By Kathryn McConnell
Washington File Staff Writer

Washington -- The U.S. national system to track livestock from birth to slaughter will take effect in 2007 and is expected to achieve full voluntary participation from livestock producers by 2009, says Secretary of Agriculture Mike Johanns.

The system will allow the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to identify all herd-mates of a diseased animal within 48 hours of the discovery of a serious livestock illness, he said during an April 6 press briefing.

"This represents one of the largest systemic changes ever faced by the [U.S.] livestock industry," the secretary said.

The "massive" project that will account for some 100 million head of cattle in the United States is being implemented on a "very aggressive schedule," he said.

USDA began to implement the first stages of the system -- called the National Animal Identification System (NAIS) -- in 2004, shortly after the first case of bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE), or mad cow disease, was discovered in one cow in December 2003.

USDA has already developed a system to register "premises" that deal with livestock and registration guidelines for U.S. state agriculture agencies and industry, according to a USDA press release.

More than 235,000 premises -- farms, sale barns and processing plants -- have already registered, USDA said.

The guidelines also call for the registration of all recently born animals by 2009, said John Clifford, USDA's chief veterinarian. The registration system has had good acceptance among producers, Johanns said.

Registration and movement databases will be privately managed with data made accessible to state and federal officials, he said.

The NAIS will give U.S. state and federal officials the capability to identify all animals and premises that have had direct contact with a serious disease, according to USDA.

The department said it supports the privatization of the data-tracking component of the system as "the most practical and timely and least burdensome possible." Industry also has said it prefers a private system, Johanns said.

"USDA believes that it is critically important to develop the right framework for the system to facilitate successful implementation" by producers and processors, he said.

By early 2007 state and federal animal health officials will be able to query the private databases -- jointly called the Animal Trace Processing System -- for livestock movement information during a disease investigation.

Still in question is if or when it would be mandatory for U.S. livestock producers to register and report the movements of their animals.

Several countries already have animal identification systems in place and are using them to gain competitive advantage, Johanns said.

The time for all countries to have animal identification and registration systems "has arrived," the secretary said.

USDA has posted on its Web site new documents outlining the general technical standards that must be met by a private animal tracking database to achieve integration into the national system, Johanns said.

A transcript
(http://www.usda.gov/wps/portal/!ut/p/_s.7_0_A/7_0_1OB?contentidonly=true&contentid=2006/04/0121.xml) of Johanns' press briefing and April 6 press release
(http://www.usda.gov/wps/portal/!ut/p/_s.7_0_A/7_0_1OB?contentidonly=true&contentid=2006/04/0120.xml) are on the USDA Web site.

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*EUR525 04/07/2006

U.S., China To Partner for Better Global Environment
(Effort marks new era of global environmental cooperation) (610)

Washington -- Marking a new era of global environmental cooperation, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Administrator Stephen Johnson departs April 7 on the first trip to China in seven years by an EPA administrator.

Johnson will meet with top Chinese environmental officials to discuss opportunities for increased cooperation and to observe progress on existing collaborative initiatives. He will visit the cities of Beijing, Lijiang and Shanghai, according to an April 7 EPA press release.

"Just as we live in a global economy, we also live in a global environment," Johnson said. "As major contributors to the global economy, the U.S. and China are vital to the health of the global environment."

In Beijing, Johnson will meet with Minister Zhou Shengxian of China's State Environmental Protection Administration and Deputy Director Pei Chenghu of the Beijing Environmental Protection Bureau to highlight collaborative clean air efforts, particularly for the 2008 Olympics. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/eap/Archive/2005/Apr/15-909210.html>).)

China has committed to hosting a "green" Olympics by working to improve Beijing air quality, using recyclable materials, and building sustainable structures that will have immediate commercial uses after the Olympics.

Johnson and Zhou will sign an agreement on hazardous-waste management that will encourage cooperation in finding and disposing of polychlorinated biphenyls, or PCBs. PCBs are mixtures of synthetic industrial chemicals whose manufacture and use have been restricted in the United States since 1976 because of their harm to the environment.

The EPA also will help develop programs in China similar to U.S. programs to clean up large areas of contaminated land, and turn them into commercially viable new developments.

In Lijiang, Yunnan province, Johnson will visit one of two EPA-funded pilot projects that use cleaner, safer home cooking and heating practices.

Almost half of the world's population burns fuels like firewood, coal and crop residues indoors for home cooking and heating. High levels of pollutants in this indoor smoke increase rates of disease and death.

In the Haixi Village outside of Lijiang, Johnson will tour village homes and observe traditional and improved cooking and heating technologies.

One pilot project by the Nature Conservancy China Program in Yunnan province will try to reduce fuel-wood use by 75 percent in the next 10 years, and use alternative energy to meet the rural communities' energy needs.

A second project in Guizhou province and implemented by the Institute for Environmental Health and Related Product Safety of the China Center for Disease Control and Prevention will test a sustainable approach to improving health through affordable, reliable, clean, safe and efficient household energy use.

In Shanghai, whose population is 20 million, Johnson will attend several events that show China's commitment to cooperation with the United States in promoting cleaner air.

Johnson and Chinese officials will announce an air quality forecasting and public notification system in Shanghai to be modeled on an AIRNow system used in more than 300 U.S. cities to help protect public health.

On a tour of the Wai Gaiqiao coal-fired power plant, Johnson will observe installed advanced scrubber technologies that control sulfur dioxide emissions that lead to acid rain, smog and other pollution.

Johnson also will visit the port terminal in Wai Gaiqiao and meet with officials from the Shanghai Municipal Port Administration Bureau and the Port of Los Angeles as they begin the next phase of a partnership supported by EPA to reduce air pollution from port activities.

More information (<http://www.epa.gov/oia/airandclimate/byregion/chinaair.html>) about the EPA's work with China and the text of the press release (<http://yosemite.epa.gov/opa/admpress.nsf/b1ab9f485b098972852562e7004dc686/5fbbf55112be2a08852571490052a8bf!OpenDocument>) are available at the EPA Web site.

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*EUR526 04/07/2006

DOE Announces \$52.5 Million for Basic Hydrogen Research
(Work to help meet challenges of hydrogen production, use, storage) (380)

Washington – U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) Secretary Samuel Bodman April 6 announced a forthcoming three-year, \$52.5 million solicitation to support new innovations in hydrogen technology.

The solicitation, to be released later in April, supports President Bush's Advanced Energy Initiative – which seeks to reduce dependence on foreign oil – and will support research to help overcome the scientific challenges associated with hydrogen production, use and storage.

Bodman made the announcement while speaking to a meeting of the Society for Automotive Engineers in Detroit, according to a DOE press release.

"This investment in basic research is designed to spur new innovation and breakthroughs that will help us build a hydrogen-based economy," Bodman said. "I believe this will help us overcome technical barriers and bring hydrogen and fuel cell technology one step closer to the showroom."

The solicitation will target challenges that crosscut hydrogen storage, production and use identified in the DOE report, Basic Research Needs for the Hydrogen Economy.

The areas for research will include novel hydrogen storage materials, catalysts and membranes. It also will create new information to expand on existing DOE basic research and provide the longer-term knowledge needed to move toward a hydrogen economy.

Hydrogen is at the center of the nation's long-term strategy for energy independence and reducing pollutants and greenhouse gases, but Bodman also discussed nearer-term technologies for reducing foreign oil dependence.

He urged all automakers to produce vehicles that run on clean-burning E-85 fuel – a mixture of 85 percent renewable ethanol and 15 percent gasoline. He also announced that DOE will solicit proposals for public-private partnerships to make E-85 more widely available.

Bodman also asked automakers to expand their hybrid-electric vehicle lines and announced that DOE is requesting more funding for advanced batteries to expand the all-electric, zero-emission range and fuel economy of these vehicles.

The Energy Department report (<http://www.sc.doe.gov/bes/hydrogen.pdf>) (PDF, 178 pages) on basic research needs is available on the department's Web site.

Text of the press release (<http://www.energy.gov/news/3439.htm>) on Bodman's speech is available on the Department of Energy Web site.

For more information, see Energy Policy (http://usinfo.state.gov/gi/global_issues/energy_policy.html).

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*EUR527 04/07/2006

United States Will Not Seek Human Rights Council Seat
(U.S. secretary of state pledges political, diplomatic, financial support) (700)
By Judy Aita
Washington File U.N. Correspondent Writer

United Nations -- Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice has decided that the United States will not seek a seat on the new U.N. Human Rights Council, U.S. officials said April 6.

In a statement announcing the U.S. decision, State Department spokesman Sean McCormack said "there are strong candidates in our regional group, with long records of support for human rights, that voted in favor of the resolution creating the council. They should have the opportunity to run."

McCormack said that the United States "will actively campaign on behalf of candidates genuinely committed to the promotion and protection of human rights" and also will "actively campaign against states that systematically abuse human rights."

The United States was in the forefront of support for Secretary-General Kofi Annan's 2005 proposal to abolish the discredited Commission on Human Rights and replace it with a strong new body to protect and promote human rights and fundamental freedoms. But it voted March 15 against the creation of the council, criticizing the criteria for membership as not being strong enough to keep human rights abusers off the council.

However, U.S. Ambassador John Bolton, U.S. representative to the United Nations, pledged support saying that the United States "will work cooperatively with other member states to make the council as strong and effective as it can be." (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/is/Archive/2006/Mar/16-752125.html>).)

McCormack said that the United States will support the new council "politically, diplomatically as well as financially" and will be an observer. The United States also will encourage the new council to address serious cases of human rights abuse in Iran, Cuba, Zimbabwe, Burma, Sudan and North Korea, he said.

The spokesman said that Rice made the decision in consultation with her advisers and "after a period of reflection on the matter" that "as a matter of fairness" the United States would defer to the other announced candidates in the Western regional group.

Annan was "disappointed" by the U.S. decision, U.N. spokesman Stephane Dujarric said, adding, "The secretary-general very much hopes the United States will be an active 'player' in defense of human rights."

MAY ELECTIONS SET FOR NEW COUNCIL

The General Assembly will hold elections for the first members of the 47-nation Human Rights Council at U.N. headquarters in New York on May 9. Seats are apportioned to the five regional groups and successful candidates will need the support of an absolute majority of the 191 U.N. member states, or 96 votes.

Candidates are to submit voluntary pledges and commitments on the promotion and protection of human rights. Member states are to take those pledges as well as candidates' human rights records into account when voting.

The first meeting of the Human Rights Council will be on June 19 in Geneva. The council will meet regularly, scheduling no fewer than three 10-week sessions a year and will be able to hold special sessions if needed.

As of April 6, a total of 35 countries had announced their candidacies. There is no deadline for applications, thus countries can submit their names even as the voting begins on May 9.

In the Western European and Other States Group, to which the United States belongs, eight countries are vying for seven seats: Canada, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Portugal, Switzerland and the United Kingdom.

Argentina, Brazil, Cuba, Mexico, Nicaragua and Peru are seeking the eight Latin American and Caribbean seats. So far, Algeria is the only candidate for 13 African seats.

The Eastern European seats are being sought by 13 countries: Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Czech Republic, Georgia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Russia, Slovenia and Ukraine.

Seven countries have informed the General Assembly of their candidacies for 13 Asian seats: Bangladesh, China, India, Iran, Jordan, Pakistan and South Korea.

Members will serve three-year terms and will not be eligible for immediate re-election after serving two consecutive terms.

For additional information, see United States and U.N. Reform (http://usinfo.state.gov/is/international_security/UNGA_2005.html).

The full text (<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2006/64182.htm>) of McCormack's statement is available on the State Department Web site.

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*EUR528 04/07/2006

U.S., Belgium Sparking Grassroots Network for Muslims in Europe
(New initiative aims to create dialogue for communities to discuss problems) (840)
By Vince Crawley
Washington File Staff Writer

Washington -- The United States hopes to spark an international network that allows mainstream Muslims in Europe and North America regularly to discuss issues of alienation and extremism, a U.S. diplomat told Congress on April 5.

The new approach connects previously isolated Muslim groups in an effort to "mobilize the moderates and marginalize the militants," said Tom Korologos, U.S. ambassador to Belgium, where the concept was launched in a two-day meeting in November 2005.

The initiative is "a model for generating not just a conference or two, but an entire movement of mainstream Muslims across Europe to ease alienation and combat extremism," Korologos told the Senate Armed Services Committee. He testified along with other State Department officials and scholars on the issue of Islamist extremism in Europe. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/eur/Archive/2006/Apr/06-77034.html>).)

In November 2005, the U.S. Embassy in Brussels, Belgium, helped host a three-day meeting of 32 American Muslims and 65 Belgian Muslims.

"These are communities that feel under siege post-9/11," Korologos testified. "The dialogue gave them an opportunity to be seen, to be heard and to be acknowledged and -- most importantly -- to be respected. ... They told us that this was the first time they actually felt as if the American government respected their opinion enough to ask them to share their experiences with others."

The gathering was called “Muslim Communities Participating in Society: A Belgian-U.S. Dialogue” and was coordinated with nongovernmental organizations and private sponsors.

“The purpose was to discuss everyday practical issues regarding Muslim participation in society,” Korologos testified. “It was a first-ever people-to-people exchange between American and Belgian Muslims, focusing on Muslim identity, economic opportunity, media portrayal, youth development and women’s issues.”

He stressed that the meeting “was NOT another academic or typical ‘think-tank’ exercise with experts lecturing from a podium.” Instead, the meeting involved “Muslims talking to other Muslims. This was a dialogue. Not a monologue.”

The dialogue produced immediate results, Korologos said. The mayors of Detroit, Michigan, and Genk, Belgium, attended and spoke of how their large Muslim communities have made themselves at home in the two cities. The two mayors agreed to begin a sister-city relationship.

Representatives of the Islamic Society of North America attended the conference and announced a package of internships, scholarships and exchanges for Belgian imams, Muslim leaders, teachers and students to visit the United States and continue their interactions with the U.S. Muslim community.

Several other exchanges and projects were inspired by the conference, including a journalism study by the University of Southern California and a Belgian partner to discuss media coverage of Muslims and Islam.

“Four or five more conferences like this can lead to a network of moderate Muslims,” Korologos said.

About 15 million to 20 million Muslims live in Western Europe -- roughly four times the number of those living in the United States. Muslims make up about 5 percent of the population of Western Europe and are the continent’s fastest-growing minority. If current birth trends continue, Muslims could become Europe’s majority population in the next century. The U.S. government increasingly is trying to help Muslims in Europe better understand life in the United States to overcome widespread anti-U.S. sentiment. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/eur/Archive/2006/Jan/24-500110.html>).)

Although there are differences in economic status and migration histories, Muslims in Belgium and the United States “share common experiences as minorities in largely Christian and secular Western societies,” Korologos said.

The 500,000 Muslims in Belgium are primarily immigrants or descendants of immigrants from Turkey and Morocco. They enjoy a long history of multiculturalism and are not “ghettoized into depressing high-rise neighborhoods,” Korologos said. The nature of Belgian politics also allows them to win elections. For example, Korologos said, Muslims have won one-quarter of the seats in a Brussels city election, roughly their share of the population. Nationwide, four to six Muslims serve in Belgium’s parliament, he said. By contrast, searching the U.S. political scene for an American counterpart, Korologos said his staff was able to find only one elected Muslim in the United States, a state senator in North Carolina.

An important part of the conference was that “we displayed no U.S. superiority,” Korologos said. “We professed no easy answers. ... We said our two societies shared the common challenges and goal of Muslim integration. Indeed, our U.S. participants were impressed by the level of political clout of Belgian Muslims. We reached out to our Belgian friends to work with us. And ultimately, they did.”

For additional information, see the notice of April 11 webchat (<http://usinfo.state.gov/eur/Archive/2006/Apr/04-383678.html>) on Muslim integration and community outreach in the United States and a related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/eur/Archive/2005/Sep/07-600416.html>) on a previous USINFO webchat on this issue.

See also Muslim Communities Participating in Society
(http://brussels.usembassy.gov/muslim_communities_participating_in_society_a_belgian-u.s._dialogue)
on the U.S. Embassy site in Brussels.

(The Washington File is a product of the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://usinfo.state.gov>)
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*EUR529 04/07/2006

Technology, Codes of Ethics Can Help Ensure Confidence in Courts
(Russian chief justice discusses judicial transparency with U.S. counterparts) (630)
By Alexandra Abboud
Washington File Staff Writer

Washington -- A Russian judge recently found common ground with his American counterparts on the need to build citizens' confidence in the judicial system and on some tools to help achieve that goal.

Anton Aleksandrovich Ivanov, chief justice of the Supreme Arbitrage Court of the Russian Federation, wants to increase openness and transparency in Russian courts, and ensure that Russians trust the judiciary.

Five U.S. judges from federal courts in Colorado, Oklahoma, Washington and Tennessee hosted Ivanov at a 10-day program on transparency in commercial courts in the United States and Russia.

During the 10-day program held March 25 to April 5, the Russian and U.S. judges held meetings in Delaware, Washington and Colorado. During these sessions, they met with U.S. Supreme Court Chief Justice John Roberts and associate justices John Paul Stevens, Anthony Kennedy and Stephen Breyer in Washington, and with Governor Bill Owens in Colorado.

Through a series of discussions, Russian and U.S. federal judges worked together to share ideas and promote judicial ethics and the use of technology to strengthen the judiciary in the United States and Russia.

Ivanov said he believes technology will play a vital role in the strengthening of judiciaries in Russia. Although many Russian courts already publish their decisions on the Internet, there is no integrated system in the Russian judiciary for collecting these decisions, he said.

"In this respect studying the process of electronic case processing [in the U.S.] was extremely important," said Ivanov. "The ability to observe how the system works ... will definitely be helpful in creating a similar system of our own [in Russia]."

George C. Paine II, chief judge U.S. Bankruptcy Court, Middle District of Tennessee, said he welcomed the discussion of the importance of technology in the judiciary in terms of addressing issues in U.S. courts.

"The U.S. Bankruptcy court is a new court established in 1978," said Paine. "We have faced and we are still facing many of the same issues [the Russian courts] are, so we see a lot of similarities."

JUDICIAL CODES OF ETHICS

Exploring judicial ethics codes for judges, including financial disclosure requirements like those required of U.S. federal judges, also is important for the Russian judiciary, said Ivanov. Judicial ethical requirements that are understood by judges and the public alike not only increase transparency, he said, but are "necessary in order to increase trust towards our courts."

Ivanov is chief justice of the high arbitration court in Russia, the highest court for cases involving commercial disputes. As the market economy continues to develop in Russia, the Supreme Arbitrage Court will play an increasingly vital role, said Judge Sid Brooks of the U.S. Bankruptcy Court in Denver, who participated in the program. "Russia is a powerful and important friend," he said.

The U.S. Department of State, the Open World Leadership Center, a U.S. congressional program, and the Russian American Rule of Law Consortium jointly sponsored the program. The consortium is composed of legal communities throughout the United States working together to develop and strengthen legal institutions in Russia and the United States.

Vermont Supreme Court Justice John Dooley, who is president of the Russian American Rule of Law Consortium, has traveled to Russia more than 20 times and lauds the work of his Russian judicial counterparts. "Every day they work to improve the quality of justice and access to justice that Russian citizens deserve," said Dooley. "They inspire us to give more of our time to help them in their struggle."

For additional information, see Rule of Law (http://usinfo.state.gov/dhr/democracy/rule_of_law.html).

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*EUR530 04/07/2006

Transcript: Head of Global Summit of Women Discusses Women's Economic Opportunities
(USINFO Webchat transcript, April 6) (2150)

Irene Natividad, president of Global Summit of Women, discussed the importance of women economic opportunities worldwide.

Following is the transcript:

(begin transcript)

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE
Bureau of International Information Programs
USINFO Webchat Transcript

Democracy Dialogues Women's Economic Opportunities

Guest: Irene Natividad

Date: April 6, 2006

Time: 11 a.m. Eastern Standard Time (1500 GMT)

The Global Summit of Women has become an important forum for the exchange of ideas and the building of productive alliances, especially in terms of economic opportunities for women worldwide. Building on the theme of women's rights, this Democracy Dialogues Webchat features Irene Natividad, president of the Global Summit of Women, which will be held in 2006 in Cairo in June.

Ms. Natividad will be online to answer your questions about the importance of women's economic opportunities in a USINFO Webchat April 6 at 11:00 a.m. EST (1500 GMT).

IRENE NATIVIDAD: Hi, I'm happy to be here, so please let's get started.

QUESTION [Mizanur Rahman Khan (Dhaka)]: How do you look at the issue of women empowerment in highly developed countries. Is it satisfactory?

ANSWER [Irene Natividad]: As an American, I can tell you that women's empowerment in the West has not been achieved. Just look at the numbers -- no woman president ever whereas a woman is head of state in your country; only 14% of Congress is female; only 8 women CEOs in the 500 largest companies in the US and only 16% of senior executive positions held by women. Where women are economically is in the middle, where they make up 45% of middle management. So our goal here is to move women up to break through the glass ceiling of leadership in business and government.

Q [IRC Tashkent]: Greetings from a group of USG program alumni in Tashkent! We have a list of questions to you, Ms. Natividad.

1) How do women, living in a male dominant society with an underdeveloped economy, empower themselves?

A: Earn a living. When women bring money home to their families, they acquire power. That's why the whole micro enterprise movement in which 80% of participants are women, has been such a revolutionary development in many countries. Women have always worked, but to get paid for their work is the key to empowerment. Having money leads women to upgrade their children's education, health and their own status within the community.

WEBCHAT MODERATOR: Do you know who Sojourner Truth is? Jeannette Rankin? Sacagawea? They are all women who made important contributions to the building of the United States. Learn about these and other Women of Influence (<http://usinfo.state.gov/products/pubs/womeninfln/>) by visiting our online publication.

Q [oels]: I am from Madagascar, if you think that women's empowerment in highly developed countries has not been achieved yet, so how about women's empowerment in underdeveloped countries, for example in Africa, where the women's educational level is most of the time too low? is there any chance to achieve it in these countries?

A: Absolutely. Africa may not have resources, but women there have become creative with limited means. You just elected a woman president in Liberia, whereas we in the US can just dream about that for now. You have a woman prime minister in Mozambique in Luisa Diogo, who has turned the economy of her country around when she was Finance Minister. There are also a wealth of micro credit programs that have lifted lots of women out of poverty. Indeed, education is the key because it the means to more opportunities for women and girls. Economic power is tied to educational opportunities, which is why the success of so many women as micro entrepreneurs has led to their children's wider educational options.

Q [IRC Tashkent]: How can the women of the world make international economic integration more effective, in what fields?

A: We already have a global economy, so the economic integration you're pointing out is already HERE. The key, however, is to make women active players in that economy. At the Global Summit of Women, we provide a forum for women leaders in business, gov't and enterprises of all sizes to form alliances across borders that can expand their network as well as to learn from each other, so that we don't all start from zero.

WEBCHAT MODERATOR: "IRC" is an Information Resource Center. IRCs are located at many U.S. Embassies around the world.

Q [IRC Tashkent]: What do economic opportunities mean?

A: Economic opportunity to me means the ability of any woman in any country to earn a living whether through working for others or through her own entrepreneurial activity. That opportunity is not always there in equal terms for women. There is a worldwide pay gap, which means that women are not paid as much as men even for the same jobs. In the U.S., that means that a woman makes 71 cents to every

dollar that a man makes. In the other countries, that pay gap is worst. But in many parts of the world, women aren't paid at all as agricultural workers -- it's considered part of their house work.

WEBCCHAT MODERATOR: In 1963, the U.S. Congress passed the Equal Pay Act prohibiting sex-based wage discrimination between men and women in the same establishment who are performing under similar working conditions. The law is administered by the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. Learn more about this important law here (<http://www.eeoc.gov/policy/epa.html>).

Q [IRC Tashkent]: Please, tell us about achievements in ensuring gender equality in decision-making on all levels of government, non-government and commercial organizations in the U.S.

- My name is Indira. I am 24. I believe I have strong leadership skills and potential for self-actualization. What important leadership qualities are necessary for young women to achieve their goals?

- What are the main obstacles in realizing women's economic opportunities in the U.S. and worldwide?

A: The biggest obstacle to women's economic empowerment worldwide is centuries' old attitudes about women's roles. That's why laws are not enough; public education is also important to convey what women bring to the table in every arena of public life. In every country, women are seen primarily as nurturers and as primary caretakers of home and family. Everything else is secondary. Their work outside the home, therefore, is not valued as much as men's. Their income is also seen as secondary, so a woman being fired from a job is not as dreadful in this perspective as a man, seen primarily as the wage earner in the family, being fired. This explains the wage gap to some extent.

You need to increase your earning potential by acquiring educational credentials. It is unfortunate but for now, women need to be overqualified to be qualified for leadership roles. Look for a mentor who will guide you, male or female, within the institution where you work. Find role models of leadership and look at the qualities that have made them succeed. Above all, believe in yourself and learn how to articulate clearly to different audiences the value you bring to any job.

Q [Charlotte Ponticelli]: Greetings, Irene! On behalf of our entire team here at the State Department's International Women's Issues Office, I want to congratulate you for all your excellent contributions to our work!... Over the years, the Global Summit of Women has been an invaluable resource for promoting economic opportunities for women, building alliances and partnerships, and identifying tangible initiatives for assisting women around the world. Women leaders everywhere should really plan to attend this year's Summit in Cairo. See you there! Charlie

A: Charlie: Thank you for the kudos, and let me, in turn, tell everyone what a tremendous job continues to be done at the office of the Senior Coordinator for Women's Issues. I am so glad that the State Department has an entire program for addressing the many inequities that women face globally. Charlie has worked assiduously on the Afghan and Iraqi initiatives to advance women in those countries.

WEBCCHAT MODERATOR: Charlotte Ponticelli is the Senior Coordinator for International Women's Issues for the U.S. State Department. Learn more about the work of her office by visiting the Office of International Women's Issues (<http://www.state.gov/g/wi/>).

Q [IRC Tashkent]: Uzbekistan's majority population are Muslims. Can modern societies integrate democratic, Muslim and gender values at the same time?

A: Yes, I believe it's possible. Egypt and Morocco and Tunisia have all moved in that direction in varying degrees. Morocco has a terrific family law passed two years ago which guarantees women's rights within a family. They have quite a few women elected to Parliament due a certain percentage of seats allocated for women. Egypt has a strong commercial engagement by women either as entrepreneurs or as corporate workers. Their largest private bank is headed by a woman, the Egypt Petrochemical Holding company is led by a woman, the largest stock brokerage firm is also led by woman, and the head of Shell Egypt was a woman last year. Tunisia distinguishes itself with the number of women entrepreneurs who

are growing in rapid numbers. The government has also passed laws which has widened women's economic opportunities in that country. We need to move in stages, but women themselves must be part of the movement for change. You can't expect change to happen automatically. Here in the US, women's NGOs have worked hard for decades to craft a legislative and economic strategy for creating a level playing field for women. We're not there yet, but we 're moving incrementally.

WEBCCHAT MODERATOR: Today's webchat is part of the Department of State's Democracy Dialogues (<http://www.democracy.gov/>) project. Democracy Dialogues is a global conversation that you can participate in. The Democracy Dialogues Web site will address specific topics of democratic governance through readings, videos, photos, and historical documents, with a new topic introduced every two months.

You can join the discussion here
(http://www.democracy.gov/dd/eng_democracy_dialogues/Online_Discussion.html).

Q [IRC Cairo]: How can women build up their own career?

A: You can 'build' a career by being a proactive participant in the kinds of jobs you take. You must look in the long term as to the growth opportunities in your field, then look at the training you need, the networks you need to join, and whom to look to for guidance as a mentor. You must also be flexible and change courses if you discover you're in the wrong field or you're not interested any more.

Q [Lalati]: I'd like to talk more about my country, Madagascar, when women try to create their own businesses, men think that they try to leave them and then, they don't allowed women to work, and it's not the only problem, women leaders get lots of obstacles in their companies because they are not enough respected because they are women and people used to think it's not their places to become a leader I've experienced that so many times, how to fight against that prejudice? by the way, I'd like to greet Mrs. Ponticelli that I've the chance to meet with a few weeks ago during the reporting tour, thanks for all the great work you've done for women all around the world, I do believe, and strongly that we can achieve the women's empowerment, even in the poor countries like mine, Madagascar.

A: What you have described is the same situation women face, in varying degrees, in many countries. Perception is the biggest hurdle to overcome and nothing but achievement changes it. There are more obstacles than one realizes along the way to economic equity. What is amazing is that despite all these hurdles, women are now about 40-50% of the paid labor force globally despite discriminatory laws that prevent their being hired in the first place. Women are also about a third of small business owners in Europe and the US, 25% in Japan and 20% in China; and as I mentioned before, 80% of micro entrepreneurs are women. Given women's lack of access to credit, it's amazing how women have found their way to owning their own businesses. Now it's up to governments to foster that growth. Look at the cup half full instead of half empty and it will keep you going.

WEBCCHAT MODERATOR: Dear participants, we want to thank you for your participation in today's USINFO Webchat. The webchat is now closed. We will be conducting more chats on this topic and others including Muslim life in America, How "American" is American culture, Jazz, and protecting the environment. You are welcome to join the discussion!

A transcript of today's chat will be posted to this site shortly and to our homepage within a day. Please visit our homepage (<http://usinfo.state.gov/usinfo/Products/Webchats.html>).

IRC TASHKENT: Ms. Natividad, the group of USG programs alumni would like to thank you for your great resourceful answers to our questions. We look forward to other meetings with you in the future. Good luck in your noble mission!

(end transcript)

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<http://usinfo.state.gov>)
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*EUR531 04/07/2006

Text: U.S. Pledges Another \$13 Million to Pakistan Earthquake Relief
(Funds aimed at helping victims return to their homes) (640)

U.S. officials in Islamabad, Pakistan, announced April 7 that the United States is earmarking \$13 million in transitional assistance to Pakistan as earthquake relief activities move into the reconstruction phase.

The United States has already provided nearly \$100 million in humanitarian supplies and \$110 million in logistical support from the Defense Department to help the victims of the October 8 disaster survive the winter.

The new funds will finance more than a dozen projects designed to assist those who are returning to their villages in earthquake-affected areas. The money will provide economic support, food, water and transitional shelter as the communities begin to rebuild. The U.S. transitional support projects will be focused in Bagh, Tehsil Valley and the Siran Valley.

U.S. Ambassador to Pakistan Ryan Crocker said the projects "will assist in providing the essential building blocks that communities need to encourage returns, re-growth and development."

The United States has pledged \$200 million to support earthquake reconstruction projects in Pakistan over the next four years. In addition, U.S. corporations and private citizens have pledged \$109 million to the relief effort.

For additional information, see U.S. Response to the Earthquake in South Asia
(http://usinfo.state.gov/sa/south_asia/earthquake.html).

Following is the text of a press release from the U.S. Embassy in Islamabad:

(begin text)

Embassy of the United States of America
Islamabad, Pakistan

U.S. To Provide \$13 Million for Earthquake Activities

Islamabad, April 7, 2006 – At a ceremony organized by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) in Islamabad, U.S. Ambassador Ryan C. Crocker announced that the United States, through the USAID, will provide more than \$13 million for earthquake transition activities and has committed \$6.5 million towards four projects. The ceremony launched the next step in U.S. support for earthquake efforts.

"We are pleased to announce these new programs on the eve of the six-month anniversary of the earthquake," said Ambassador Crocker. "They will assist in providing the essential building blocks that communities need to encourage returns, re-growth and development."

Transition activities are designed to assist those returning to their homes in the earthquake-affected areas, as well as those who stayed in their villages over the winter, to re-establish their lives and communities through programs that support livelihoods, food security, water supply and transitional shelter.

The transition activities will focus on the geographic areas in which the United States has provided emergency relief – in Bagh, Tehsil Valley and the Siran Valley.

New USAID Mission Director in Pakistan Jonathan Addleton added, "USAID and its partners will work to help stabilize and re-establish communities, making it easier for the recovery process to succeed, paying special attention to health, education and economic opportunities."

Today, four grantees were announced: the Agency for Technical Cooperation and Development (ACTED), Catholic Relief Services (CRS), the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and Save the Children. About ten more grants will be announced in the coming days.

The new grants represent a continuity of U.S. support for earthquake relief. Among the support provided during the relief phase was almost \$100 million for humanitarian support and \$110 million in support from the Department of Defense. U.S. corporations and private citizens have pledged \$109 million. In addition, the United States will invest \$200 million over the next four years to assist Pakistan in earthquake reconstruction. These comprise the U.S. pledge of \$510 million in earthquake relief and reconstruction efforts to assist the people of Pakistan and to support the Pakistani government's relief and reconstruction efforts.

In addition, the United States, through USAID, is providing more than \$1.5 billion in development assistance to Pakistan over the next five years to improve education, health, governance and economic growth.

(end text)

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U.S. Commits \$92 Million More To Prevent Famine in Horn of Africa
(Funds will help stop spread of famine, diminish food insecurity in region) (260)

Washington -- President Bush announced April 6 that the United States is committing an additional \$92 million to prevent widespread famine in the Horn of Africa and to diminish the underlying causes of food insecurity in the region.

The amount includes use of funds designated by the U.S. Congress for early intervention to prevent or mitigate the effects of famine, according to a statement by White House press secretary Scott McClellan.

"We commend the governments of Kenya, Ethiopia, and Djibouti for their assistance in the delivery of aid to prevent another catastrophic famine in the Horn of Africa," the statement said.

The funds are in addition to more than \$150 million in emergency humanitarian food and nonfood assistance already provided by the United States to the region since October 2005. (See U.S. Aid to Africa (http://usinfo.state.gov/af/africa/aid_to_africa.html).)

"The president calls upon other donor nations to contribute to this effort," the White House statement said.

Kenyan President Mwai Kibaki said recently that 5 million Kenyans are facing food shortages as a result of failed rains, well above the 3.5 million people being targeted by international aid agencies, according to press reports.

The drought has hit northern and northeastern Kenya and also has affected arid and semiarid areas of Somalia, Ethiopia, Djibouti, Tanzania and Burundi, the reports said. More than 11.5 million people are expected to need food aid in the next six months.

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